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# Infectious Affect: The Phobic Imagination In American Literature

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# Infectious Affect: The Phobic Imagination In American Literature

## Abstract

Infectious Affect: The Phobic Imagination in American Literature begins with this question: by what literary pathways did the -phobia suffix come to shape U.S. politics so profoundly? In current political discourse, Americans rely on phobia as a concept to describe conditions of social inequality. People and policies that negatively impact communities based on sexual orientation, gender identification, ethnicity, race, or religion are understood to be homophobic, transphobic, xenophobic, or Islamophobic. However implicitly, these terms also aspire to a widely accepted hypothesis: in short, that systemic inequality begins with and is sustained by a nucleus of fear, on the part of those wielding the greatest political power. Taking part in the new philological turn in literary studies, my dissertation shows that the -phobia suffix first began to be adapted from medical literature to explain sociopolitical phenomena in the late 1700s, then went on to catch on rapidly in the antebellum period. At the same time, in tracing this history we discover that phobia's proliferation as a political category did not go uncontested. I take less interest, then, in those who played by the rules of a consolidating phobic imagination than I do in writers who repurposed it to counterintuitive ends. In telling the backstory of activist phobias, Infectious Affect explores the rise of a phobic imagination in medical, literary, and political contexts alike, proposing that phobia activated a new dynamism between disparate modes of knowledge production.

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INFECTIOUS AFFECT:  
THE PHOBIC IMAGINATION IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Don James McLaughlin

A DISSERTATION

In

English

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

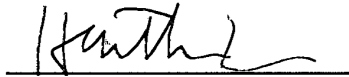
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2017

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---

*For Benjamin,*

*Whose example has taught me the art of disclosing one's phobias  
with wit, ideal timing, and pleasure*



## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In her preface to a 1925 reprint of Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896), Willa Cather begins by recollecting a sentiment Jewett once expressed over the course of their correspondence, before passing in 1909. "*The thing that teases the mind over and over for years, and at last gets itself put down rightly on paper - whether little or great, it belongs to Literature,*" Jewett wrote. Cather believed that for Jewett, the aphorism had proven accurate over the course of her career, and that the product of her efforts had been exceptional. Yet, as many a scholar will testify, Cather's continued insistence on the timeless value of Jewett's craft had as much to do with the mutual admiration the two friends had formed together in person years earlier. Thus, the aphorism should, perhaps, be edited for accuracy: "*The thing that teases the mind over and over for years, in the company of honest friends and incisive mentors, which, in being strengthened by this sustained companionship, at last gets itself put down rightly on paper – whether little or great, it belongs to Literature.*" This has been my experience writing this dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania, and I am indebted to many for their generosity, example, and friendship.

I should start by thanking my colleagues in the English Department at Penn. For two years, I had the incredible privilege of organizing the "Gender and Sexuality Reading Group," first with Sal Nicolazzo, then again with Joan Lubin, both times under the direction of Heather Love and Melissa Sanchez. These years were very formative. The generous support of the English Department and other programs at Penn made it possible for us to sustain brilliant, ongoing dialogues and events series, featuring some of the most influential scholars doing work in the field. This culminated in an incredible conference

called *Queer Method*, which, through the collaborative efforts of myself, Sal, Joan, Mary Zaborskis, Jeanne Vaccaro, Kate Aid, Matt Goldmark, Kelly Rich, Andrés Castro-Samoya, Clare Mullaney, and Jess Hurley, attracted nearly 1,000 attendees over two days, and continues to be one of the smartest, most theoretically challenging conferences I've attended. Following these years with Gen/Sex, I had the good fortune of coordinating the American Literature Reading Group, first with Kalyan Nadiminti, then again with Jazmín Delgado and Evelyn Soto, under the guidance of Nancy Bentley. In this capacity, I was given wonderful opportunities to bring cutting edge scholarship to Penn, in collaboration with a number of colleagues very dear to me, including Kevin Gotkin and Mashinka Firunts. The opportunities at Penn are vast, and the value placed on student autonomy very high for those who take the initiative. I feel privileged to have been at Penn at the same time as these dazzling colleagues, who have taught me much in our joint efforts to forge lasting, interdisciplinary dialogue.

My research has been well-funded at Penn, both from within the institution and from without. For six of the seven years of my PhD, I have been supported by a Benjamin Franklin Fellowship, without which I could not have completed the degree. In addition, to plan the aforementioned conferences on campus, I have been awarded grants from the Provost, GAPSA, and SASgov. I am grateful to the Critical Writing Program for granting me a teaching fellowship during the 2016/2017 academic year, during which time I was able to complete the dissertation. However, more than any other department or program on campus (with the exception of English), I am indebted to the McNeil Center for Early American Studies and its director, Dan Richter. During the 2015/2016 academic year, I was awarded a Marguerite Bartlett Hamer Dissertation Fellowship by the center.

The following year I was awarded a smaller fellowship to remain a research fellow at the center and to plan the Brown-Bag Workshop Series, featuring work by PhD Candidates writing strong dissertations on early American history, literature, and art across North America. These two years have been the most intellectually impactful of my time at Penn. The stellar scholarship I have read and heard at MCEAS, week after week, has been a game changer. I have been able to maintain my unique perspective on histories of literature, gender and sexuality, and affect in the late colonial, early national, and antebellum United States, and to maintain the distinctiveness of my training in literary history. Yet countless pathways of interdisciplinary dialogue have also been opened to me, changing my work for the better. Without a doubt, the friendships I have formed in this context have been the most transformative part of my MCEAS interactions. Rachel Walker, Liz Ellis, Daniel Couch, Jessica Blake, Elizabeth Bacon Eager, Alex Finley, Andrew Inchiosa, Lauren Kimball, Lori Daggar, and Whitney Martinko have all changed my dissertation for the better, through the excellence of their own projects and their challenging feedback on my own. As for comparable institutions beyond Penn, from which I have likewise benefitted, I must thank the Library Company of Philadelphia (LCP), and Connie King in particular, for inviting me to collaborate on the exhibit *That's So Gay: Outing Early America* at an early moment in my research. Thanks also to the Kislak Center at Penn, Houghton Library, Beinecke, New York Public Library, and Wellcome Library for allowing me to conduct research in their collections, as well as to the College of Physicians of Philadelphia and LCP, for permission to print relevant materials from the Silas Weir Mitchell Papers and Rush Family Papers, respectively.

While my visit was brief, I owe a great deal to the American Antiquarian Society (AAS) for supporting some of this research during the summer of 2015. I must thank the inimitable Paul Erickson, who ensured that the fellowship experience was rewarding and beneficial on multiple fronts. The curators and archivists at AAS are likewise unmatched. I am especially thankful for the help and advice given to me by Molly Hardy, Ashley Cataldo, Kimberly Pelkey, Lauren Hewes, Laura Wasowicz, Nan Wolverton, and Georgia Barnhill. Molly Hardy's exceptional understanding of digital databases and OCR technology helped me begin refining my methods for tracing phobia's various cultural, medical, and aesthetic uses in antebellum print culture. During my afternoon talk, Nan Wolverton was the first to suggest to me that a *Harper's Weekly* illustration I had discovered, titled "A Consistent Negrophobist," might be a parody of John Singleton Copley's *Watson and the Shark*, an interpretation with which I have come to agree. Shortly after this revelation, I sat down for a few hours with Georgia Barnhill to see if we could find the illustration's artist. Locating a triangle signature at the bottom, Georgia recognized it immediately as Frank Bellew, at which point I was given a much-needed crash course in the kind of career he, Thomas Nast, and their contemporaries forged. After my Wednesday talk, Ashley Cataldo encouraged me further to sharpen my argument about the importance of recognizing the history of phobia's use as a political epithet. Ashley suggested that perhaps I was advocating an alternative practice of "slow etymology," in which we take greater care to understand the meaning words carry, or have discarded over time. This term appears in my introduction, and I am glad to credit Ashley for suggesting it.

Even as I have traveled to various special collections, across the Atlantic and back again, Penn has continued to remain my institutional home for the past seven years. Unsurprisingly, my gratitude on this front is not yet complete. Like Sisyphus and his hill, any attempt to exhaust my thanks for the opportunities I've had in this department will certainly come up short. Still, one has to push onward. The cohort of which I have been a part at Penn, made up of myself, Omari Weekes, Sierra Lomuto, Laura Soderberg, Aundeah Kearney, and Christine Woody has a reputation for being the most likable cohort Penn English has known in recent memory. The exceptional personalities of my cohort members attest to the fact that this reputation is warranted. From poker nights, Monopoly tournaments, and sledding down the snowy hills of Clark Park in the winter, to nights out at the Barbary, Woody's, and the Grad Lounge on Prom Night, the camaraderie we've cultivated is a rare thing. To get to know these people, share in their victories, and celebrate at the end of the day has been one of my greatest pleasures in life.

Soon enough, our cohort discovered we were not alone in our proclivity for good times. Two years after us, Mary Zaborskis, Clare Mullaney, Sara Sligar, and SaraEllen Strongman arrived at Penn. The very close friendships I have formed with Mary, Omari, Sierra, and Sara especially since these early years have meant a great deal to me. *Settlers of Catan* and rooftop kakis have often served as the occasion, but the glue has been an uncanny kinship—in intellectual interest, political like-mindedness, and shared (if also occasionally contested) leanings in the way of taste—which has kept me grounded while conducting my doctoral work. A shift in personal pronouns is warranted at this juncture. To Omari, I am inclined to reflect on our weekly Sonic excursions while attending a rather explosive seminar at Rutgers University during coursework. I continue to look

back on these conversations not just fondly, but as foundational to my thinking. To Mary, our mutual love of canines played a role in cementing the friendship early on, but from this early connection our kinship has grown across a diverse array of experiences, about which I could go on indefinitely. Most important on an intellectual level, you have taught me the importance of wit, style, and consistency. There is a queer formalism to the most mundane of your everyday interactions that has changed the way I think about the public sphere and the role of my scholarship in it.

The task becomes more demanding, and the boulder of indebtedness heavier still. The professors who have taught and mentored me at Penn have been spectacular. Courses I have taken with Paul Saint-Amour, Leo Bersani, Ania Loomba, Melissa Sanchez, Lance Wahlert, and Cindy Patton were immensely generative for me as I finished course work and prepared for field exams. However, no relationships with Penn faculty have meant more to me than those with my committee members, Heather Love, Max Cavitch, Nancy Bentley and Chi-ming Yang. Each of you has touched my life and this dissertation in profound and unique ways. When I look back and consider how full my life has been while writing under your mentorship, I am humbled. To Chi-ming, your course “Theorizing Orientalism” imparted to me, like no class had before, the art of teaching critical theory. The conversations we’ve had in the years since have helped this dissertation mature. (You were the first to tell me, “Think more about hydrophobia!”) To Nancy, our mutual love of James and Wharton have helped me feel, from the beginning of my time at Penn, like I have belonged here, despite feelings I sometimes had, early on, to the contrary. I will always look back nostalgically on our repeat trips to Han Dynasty with the likes of Robin Bernstein and Caleb Smith during the years I hosted the American

Literature Reading Group. To Max, the gratitude I need to express to you requires greater eloquence than I can muster presently. You have strengthened and renewed my confidence in this project at moments when uncertainty was mounting. I will always associate our lunch dates at Wedge & Fig with the best memories of writing the dissertation. In these interactions, romantic visions I had nurtured as a younger scholar first entering Penn English, of exchanging ideas leisurely with a profound thinker and writer I greatly admired, came to fruition. To Heather, I'm afraid the rock will squash me entirely at this point of the endeavor, but one has to make the attempt. I knew I wanted to ask you to be my dissertation advisor as soon as I read your 2009 essay "Gyn/Apology: Sarah Orne Jewett's Spinster Aesthetics," which I believe to be one of the most perfect pieces of literary criticism I have read over the last decade. You blew my mind in that essay, and you have blown my mind countless times since. Somehow, despite feeling most of the time that I am just very lucky to be in your vicinity, you have also become a good friend, with whom I have been able to be honest during happy successes and dark times alike. This friendship has made all the difference.

Two years ago, I lost a close friend from childhood, Christopher Chitty, who was finishing a PhD in the History of Consciousness Program at Santa Cruz. My life had always felt cosmically connected to Chris, for many reasons. In ways that have been both hard to navigate and meaningful, his presence is reflected in this project. For the last four years, Parker Posey, my universally loved rat terrier mix (aka "the Gremlin Kween"), has also been a vital source of companionship, and has been the real-life pup doing her best to ground a dissertation about the abstraction of canine affect in material circumstances. However, with the exception of myself, one individual has lived with this project more

consistently than any other—my partner, lover, fellow Emmylou Harris-enthusiast, dog dad, visual artist to my cerebral garrulousness, and best friend, Benjamin Hanley Brown. I see in retrospect that when we met twelve years ago we more or less collided in an inexplicable synchrony of likes, dislikes, humor, behavioral flourishes, aesthetic interests, and a mutual proclivity for the weird and the beautiful. There was nothing we could have done to resist the circumstances. Thank you for being a source of strength and distraction as I completed this project. It is to you and your perfection of the most charming gay neuroses that I dedicate this work.



## ABSTRACT

### INFECTIOUS AFFECT: THE PHOBIC IMAGINATION IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Don James McLaughlin, PhD

Dr. Heather Love  
Dr. Max Cavitch

*Infectious Affect: The Phobic Imagination in American Literature* begins with this question: by what literary pathways did the -phobia suffix come to shape U.S. politics so profoundly? In current political discourse, Americans rely on phobia as a concept to describe conditions of social inequality. People and policies that negatively impact communities based on sexual orientation, gender identification, ethnicity, race, or religion are understood to be homophobic, transphobic, xenophobic, or Islamophobic. However implicitly, these terms also aspire to a widely accepted hypothesis: in short, that systemic inequality begins with and is sustained by a nucleus of fear, on the part of those wielding the greatest political power. Taking part in the new philological turn in literary studies, my dissertation shows that the -phobia suffix first began to be adapted from medical literature to explain sociopolitical phenomena in the late 1700s, then went on to catch on rapidly in the antebellum period. At the same time, in tracing this history we discover that phobia's proliferation as a political category did not go uncontested. I take less interest, then, in those who played by the rules of a consolidating phobic imagination than I do in writers who repurposed it to counterintuitive ends. In telling the backstory of activist phobias, *Infectious Affect* explores the rise of a phobic imagination in medical, literary, and political contexts alike, proposing that phobia activated a new dynamism between disparate modes of knowledge production.

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# THE PHOBIC IMAGINATION IN AMERICAN LITERATURE, 1765-1885:

## AN INTRODUCTION

The press of my foot to the earth springs a hundred affections,  
They scorn the best I can do to relate them.

- Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself" (1855)

What would it mean to apprehend phobias historically? Not in the sense of a patient's history, à la Freud's Little Hans or Watson's Little Albert, nor as mere social construct, but rather as an epistemological advent, contingent upon discursive shifts in literary, medical, and political thought? In all of its familiar forms—as emotion, psychological illness, and social hermeneutic—phobia tends to conjure something nearly para- or counter-historical, a feeling whose power inheres in the suddenness of its interruption of other continuities. Nevertheless, against this claim to immediacy, *Infectious Affect* contends that phobia's rise as a diagnosis, cultural touchstone, and sociopolitical analytic commenced in U.S. print culture in a highly particular context. Phobia's medicalization, its versatility as a suffix, even its visceral impulsivity coalesced within a network of social and epistemological cues, which began to reach a threshold of coherence in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the crucible these discourses forged, phobia began to emerge as a distinct affective locus simultaneous with the founding of the early republic, went on to proliferate quickly in the antebellum period, and consolidated from a nascent, unwieldy structure of feeling into something more standardized in the postbellum era. In recollecting this history, *Infectious Affect*

goes beyond the narrow purview of documenting phobia's etymology and history as an idea, strange and instructive as these subjects are on their own terms. This dissertation maintains that we cannot understand important elements of American literature, aesthetics, politics, and medicine in its first hundred years without also understanding the contingencies, now alien to us, that prompted the rise of a phobic imagination in the U.S. public sphere. It maintains that nineteenth-century subjects as diverse as mental disability, contagion, theories of racial difference, sexual science, political satire, sentimental reform, an evolving gothic aesthetic, and the affective repertoire of early Americans depended on a phobic imagination and that we stand to gain significant insights once the story of phobia's evolution has been told.

Today the idea that phobia underlies the most heated battles over civil rights in the U.S. is not just taken for granted, it has become widely integrated into the terminology by which grand-scale social movements petition for recognition and stake claims to justice. Homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, and xenophobia occupy a notable ubiquity. Through social media, on the airwaves, and in print, they have tremendous cultural capital and rhetorical purchase. The first proposition of "Infectious Affect" is that this enduring popularity of the -phobia suffix reflects, in part, an implicit set of assumptions connected to what Wendy Brown has called "tolerance talk" in her book *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (2006). A concept hailed internationally as "a beacon of multicultural justice and civic peace," tolerance offers a way of interpreting political impasses between groups as matters of inexplicable aversion (Brown 2). In the strategy it provides for managing these aversions, tolerance prophesies a modest utopia where prejudices are imaginatively converted into a

kind of passive coexistence. Imbricated in this logic, the –phobia suffix invites its users to imagine a primordial field of social dread in order to advance an alternative pluralist civility. At the same time, the –phobia suffix has also consistently imported into tolerance discourse a still greater emphasis on the individual as a site of subjective wrong-headedness, driven by the occluded workings of a pathological fear. Along these lines, our ever expanding –phobia arsenal speaks to a shared sensibility, by which an array of anti-discriminatory movements have come to presume the same psychological hypothesis: in short, that structural inequality originates in and is sustained by a debilitating experience of fear, on the parts of those wielding the greatest political power. As Amanda Hess observes in an article for the *New York Times*,<sup>1</sup> just as the –phobia suffix has secured a curious cultural dominance “as the activist’s most trusted term of art for pinning prejudice on an opponent,” so then has its rhetoric premised on eradicating “mental illness,” as a kind of original sin, from democratic society. Hess notes further, “Any blowhard who spews bigotry against a marginalized group—or any journalist who pens an article perceived as insufficiently sensitive—risks being called out for an irrational anxiety over one Other or another.” However, the most significant effect of this convention, this dissertation will argue, has been the apologies phobia implicitly safeguards: phobia describes an affective liminality, wherein hypocrisies of U.S. democracy have been repeatedly naturalized as hang-ups of the human psyche, matters of individual taste, or the base instincts of a biological constitution hardwired for survival.

One of the most compelling attributes of phobia’s discursive authority has been its crossover appeal in academic discourse. While this is true of a number of fields of inquiry

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<sup>1</sup> See: “How ‘-Phobic’ Became a Weapon in the Identity Wars.” *The New York Times* (26 Jan. 2016).



(including critical race theory, feminism, and postcolonial critique), the history of its analytical purchase in queer theory has been the most intimate and enduring. Indeed, turning to the early pages of *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), we find that Eve Sedgwick begins that text—one of the most influential scholarly monographs in the quarter of a century since—with a noteworthy qualification. The “only imperative” the book will “treat as categorical,” Sedgwick explains, “is the very broad one of pursuing an antihomophobic inquiry” (14). With this objective, Sedgwick embarks on assembling a now familiar methodological toolkit, capable of facilitating “certain specific kinds of readings and interrogations, perhaps new, available in a heuristically powerful, productive, and significant form for other readers to perform on literary and social texts with, ideally, other results” (14). Yet *Epistemology of the Closet* does not characterize these readings and interrogations with the qualifier one might expect—which is to say, *queer*. Written just before the consolidation of “queer theory” into a field of study, *Epistemology of the Closet* organizes these readings and interrogations under the banner of a nascent field Sedgwick dubs, instead, “antihomophobic theory.” In so doing, the book takes as its target a term that had not been around long: a social peril called *homophobia*, coined by New York psychiatrist George Weinberg in his 1972 book *Society and the Healthy Homosexual*, defined by Weinberg as a “disease” characterized by a “dread of being in close quarters with homosexuals,” or “in the case of homosexuals themselves, self-loathing” (4).<sup>2</sup> By the time of her next book *Tendencies* (1993),

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<sup>2</sup> The question of whether homophobia is meant to indicate a pathological state of mind, or is merely euphemistic for prejudice, yields interesting results when one does the research. When the Associated Press banned the words homophobia and Islamophobia from its stylebook in 2012, it was with the explanation that phobia implies “uncontrollable fear, often a form of mental illness” and that its usage “in political or

Sedgwick was embracing, with characteristic virtuosity, in the turn of a cultural tide toward queer, invoking antihomophobic as a modifier only a handful of times.

Homophobia, however, had become a permanent feature of a corresponding disciplinary landscape: a foundational impetus to and dialectical reference point for a rapidly evolving queer analytic.

Phobia's unwavering prominence as a queer analytic in the decades since begs the question: what have been the consequences of homophobia's hegemony? To describe it as hegemonic is justifiable in the Gramscian sense: homophobia dominates thought, intellectual and cultural, as a hermeneutic for understanding the ongoing persecution of sexual minorities. The elisions wrought by this dominance have provoked dissent in recent years. A collection of essays titled *Homophobias: Lust and Loathing across Time and Space* (2009), edited by David A. B. Murray, addresses the term's limitations in the field of anthropology. In his introduction to the volume, Murray contends that one important drawback to homophobia's omnipresent usage has been its tendency to situate prejudice against gays and lesbians within a "psychological, individualized framework," which is to say as a "fear or hatred that resides in an individual's psyche" (3). Against this implication, Murray contends that discrimination has at its disposal "a range of attitudes: from indifference to dismissal, 'scientific' logic, 'tolerance,' or even a carefully delimited embrace (as in 'love the sinner, not the sin')." We might describe this equally

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social contexts" should therefore be discouraged (Byers). Plenty of critics resisted the simplistic association. However, others defended its accuracy on these same grounds, such as Patrick Strudwick whose article for *The Guardian* on the AP ban insisted that homophobia speaks to a psychological state of both fear and repression. Anti-gay bigotry, Strudwick explained, feeds ultimately on a "fear of what lurks repressed and unacknowledged in the homophobe." One instructive outcome of the AP ban on political phobias was that it revealed how split public opinion is when it comes to homophobia's denotative intent.

as an *affective heterogeneity*, and multiplicity, by which prejudice and stigma become naturalized within and foundational to public life. By focusing primarily on fear, homophobia and transphobia alike, as international rallying points of LGBT liberation, have failed to do justice to the nature of the structural violence queer persons face in both the most ephemeral and enduring of contexts, which far beyond hate speech have a history of including everything from pathologization and criminalization to the denial of civil rights, socially sanctioned violence in schools, workplace discrimination, police brutality, compromised access to or total alienation from healthcare, targeted incarceration, and, within these contexts and others, murder without legal recourse—all of which, moreover, have continued well into the present. Simultaneously, phobia's rhetorical dominance has produced a veneer of causation, by which advancements in LGBT progressivism have been caricatured as reducible to a gradual erosion of an organic, intuitive repugnance.

References to homophobia as well as transphobia in queer scholarship offer two instructive examples. Yet, as noted above, prominent critical theorists have long made use of the suffix for a range of political interventions. We might consider Frantz Fanon's analysis of *Negrophobia* in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Adrienne Rich's turn to *gynephobia* as a cross-racial phenomenon in her essay "Disloyal to Civilization" (1979), Elaine Showalter's interrogation of a divisive *matriphobia* among feminists in *Toward a Feminist Poetics* (1979), or Edward Said's provocative comparison of Islamophobia with anti-Semitism in his famous defense, "Orientalism Reconsidered" (1985). In the twenty-first century, use of the phobia suffix has continued to enjoy shared, even, we might say, symbiotic approval in critical theory and the popular press. What have been the effects of

our uninterrogated, ahistorical allegiance to this idea? And how has the history of this usage over the last two centuries shaped our experience of progressive politics in U.S. contexts? In order to answer these questions and parse the discursive baggage of phobia's rhetorical durability, this dissertation argues for unearthing its history: a history eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American and transatlantic print media show to be elaborate, contingent, and unexpected, but also dynamic, inspiring, and instructive. Focusing on writings by a range of figures, including John Adams, Benjamin Rush, Frederick Douglass, Samuel Cornish, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Victor Hugo, William Lloyd Garrison, Lydia Maria Child, John Neal, George Lippard, Edgar Allan Poe, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., Oscar Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley, Mark Twain, and Zora Neale Hurston, I argue that one thing they all had in common was the interest they showed, whether fleeting or prolonged, in phobia's evolving explanatory power. Across different contexts, these writers assisted in establishing the grounds on which phobia's analytical appeal was tested, debated, and made commonplace.

To put it more succinctly, the germ of a question motivating this study is, *by what literary pathways did the –phobia suffix come to shape U.S. politics so profoundly?* By what literary means and reasoning, that is, did the default availability of the –phobia suffix as a frame for understanding civil discord become not merely standardized, but fully integral to public perceptions of what it means to be a disenfranchised political subject, and what must happen for those conditions to change? Taken as a whole, the dissertation argues that answering these questions requires that we turn to phobia's discursive emergence at the intersection of multiple, variegated scenes of knowledge production and spheres of early American and nineteenth-century print culture. In the

past, scholars and journalists have proposed historical thresholds for the origins of phobia's cultural interest having to do with gay liberation, modernist aesthetics engaged in psychoanalysis, or the hotbed of diagnostic speculation fostered by Victorian neurology. Without a doubt, all of these developments mark important moments in the evolution of phobia as a cultural framework. However, to comprehend the historical phenomena that prompted phobia's ascendancy as a hermeneutic, we must turn first to literature of the late 1700s. Starting here, this study tells the literary history of phobia's evolution as a scientific object, feeling, and political metaphor, focusing on three interrelated fields of historical inquiry: (1) the consolidation of a psychiatric discipline in the history of medicine, (2) the history of emotions in the U.S. public sphere, and (3) queer philology as a method for rethinking the evolving relationship between political language, emotion, print media, and literary aesthetics.

**“IF I WERE A DOG, I SHOULD BE SHOT AS A MAD ONE”:  
PHOBIA’S ORIGINAL SIN, IN THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE**

Phobia's incipient legibility as an emotion was inseparable from its emergence as an object of medical science. It is worth mentioning that the history of fear as a subject of science has attracted increasing attention in recent years. In *Fear across the Disciplines* (2012), to name one example, editors Benjamin Lazier and Jan Plamper offer a collection of essays exploring the study of fear across an array of fields. To answer the question of how fear began to be taken up by biologists and in the social sciences, Ruth Leys' contribution to the volume, titled “How Did Fear Become a Scientific Object and What Kind of Object Is It?”, traces analyses of fear from Paul Ekman through the affect theory of Silvan Tomkins and, finally, back to Charles Darwin's contributions in *The Expression*

*of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872). Nevertheless, Darwin remains the earliest ground Leys treads. Here and elsewhere, phobia's emergence as a human affect deserving scientific scrutiny, diagnosis, and treatment, in the late 1700s and early 1800s, has yet to be adequately explored.

The rise of a phobic imagination in American print media commenced with a series of developments in the history of medicine, in which one rather notorious phobia began to prompt the coinage of others, by way of analogy. To get a sense of how this fear struck early Americans, what it signified symptomatically and what kind of terror it conjured, we might begin by encountering one of the most widely circulated instances reported in newspapers in either century, on both sides of the Atlantic. On the night of August 26, 1819, it is said that the recently appointed Governor General of British North America, Charles Lennox, 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Richmond, began to feel somewhat strange. Accompanied by friends, he had spent the day traversing the backwoods of the Ottawa River, with the goal of establishing a new township named Richmondville in his honor. At last, the group decided to set up camp and sit down to dinner. What followed was a "very convivial evening," sources would later attest (C.G. Lennox 4). But as the party began to disperse, it became evident the Duke was unwell. Turning to his friend Colonel Cockburn, he is said to have remarked, holding a glass of claret in his hand, "I don't know how it is, Cockburn, but I cannot relish my wine to-night as usual; and I feel that if I were a dog I should be shot as a mad one" (4-5). It was advised the Duke should get some rest, but by morning the condition had deteriorated. Soon he became incapable of swallowing fluids entirely. By the morning of August 28, friends found that his terror of liquids had become so general he could not bathe. When it was agreed he should try to

get to Montreal by canoe, to seek medical attention, he could barely bring himself to approach the river's edge. Mere proximity induced physical spasms. Finding within himself a "desperate resolution," the Governor General is said to have shouted aloud, "Charles Lennox never yet was afraid of anything!" (5). He climbed into the boat. Within a few seconds, however, the horror returned, and the Duke demanded he be returned to land. On finding the shore near enough, he jumped onto the bank and darted for the woods. When his companions caught up with him, they ushered him to a farmhouse nearby, but even the sound of the river, audible from that location, was too much. They carried him to a barn behind the house and laid him down on a bed of straw. Within moments Charles Lennox was dead.

The cause of the Duke's death was immediately apparent to family and friends, and would have been obvious to strangers as well. Clearly enough, Lennox had fallen prey to the deadly disease of *hydrophobia*, the dominant name for rabies until the late nineteenth century. Taken from the Greek word φόβος (*phóbos*), phobia originally entered the English language, as early as the fourteenth century, when writers transliterated the Greek word for rabies, spelled "ὑδροφοβία." For centuries, while other names such as "canine madness" and the Latin "*rabies canina*" circulated, hydrophobia continued to serve as the primary name for rabies because the disease was known for being characterized by an intense fear of water, incited by an inability to swallow liquids (Figure 1).<sup>3</sup> It became widely acknowledged over time that this fear of imbibing water gradually intensified, to the extent that accounts of hydrophobia reported everything from

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<sup>3</sup> When first transliterated into Late Middle English, it appears to have been spelled "idroforbia." In Old English, the equivalent was spelled "*wæterfyrhtness*" (Online Etymology Dictionary).

a dread of imbibing fluids to a terror of touching, seeing, hearing, or even audible reference to water, as demonstrated above. In the Duke's case, competing rumors immediately began to spread to explain how the Duke had become infected. Some recalled he had sustained a bite from a rabid fox a couple of months earlier, while separating it from a scuffle with a hound. Still others believed that he contracted the disease from his own dog, Blucher, whom he famously adored and allowed to sleep in his bed at night. According to this version of events, a dog stricken with hydrophobia attacked Blucher at the neck one ill-fated afternoon. Overwhelmed with "compassion," Lennox "caught" Blucher "in his arms, and applied his own lips to the part bitten" (Silliman 295). Through a miniscule split in his lip, he "imbibed the poison" and later succumbed to the madness himself. Yet perhaps the most telling element in the story is how faithfully Lennox's case met the expectations of the disease's popular appellation and favorite symptom. The Governor General's suffering was understood to have occurred over a sequence of ever-intensifying associations, wherein an initial phobia of swallowing fluids swelled into an obscene and humiliating totality.

By the mid-eighteenth century, through a transatlantic dialogue circulating by way of medical dissertations, pamphlets, and case studies, hydrophobia became a major reference point in the Atlantic world for determining the potency of fear over the human body (Fig. 1). Lennox's case, though it occurred in 1819, was in keeping with earlier eighteenth-century rabies narratives, which had begun to consolidate noticeably around the 1760s. Literature on hydrophobia began to blossom at mid-century, during a period known for its influx of "nosologies," or disease classification schemes. The most important of these schemes, published in Europe, were penned by major physicians such



as François Boissier de Sauvages de Lacroix, Carl Linnaeus, Rudolf Augustin Vogel, and William Cullen. With these figures as interlocutors, debates around the cause of hydrophobia, its contagious properties, and its relation to environmental factors began to proliferate. By consequence, the state of dread hydrophobia indexed became acknowledged increasingly as a condition necessitating study and treatment. Thus, phobia began to enter what we might best describe as a vague interim, during which pathological fear solicited increasing attention, for being a potent physiological force, while the phobia suffix remained essentially tethered to rabies as a taxonomical unit. Indeed, while Sauvages actually included within his classification scheme two additional phobias—*aerophobia*, meaning an aversion to drafts of air, and *pantophobia*, indicating a dread of everything—these appeared only in relation to hydrophobia itself, as comorbid symptoms that might likewise follow from rabid infection. A phobic sensibility was budding, but only in keeping with the parameters of an affiliated rabid symptomatology.

One of the best literary examples to register this evolving phobic sensibility in the mid-eighteenth century is John Adams' essay, "A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law" (1765). Written in response to the Stamp Act passed that same year, despised for the direct tax it imposed on the colonies as well as its requirement that printed materials use paper made and embossed in London, the essay advocates retaliation in print.<sup>4</sup> Embedded in the call to action is an affective imperative to fight the inclination toward a silent passivity nurtured by fear. Adams implores readers, "Be not intimidated, therefore,

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<sup>4</sup> Many consider this Adams' best piece of writing. As observed by the Massachusetts Historical Society, in their digital edition of his works, "From a strictly literary point of view...the 'Dissertation,' written as it was in clear, concise, ringing tones, was the most satisfying of Adams' published works." It represents, in addition, his "first effort to determine the significance of New England in American history and his initial contribution to the literature of the American Revolution."

by any terrors, from publishing with the utmost freedom, whatever can be warranted by the laws of your country; nor suffer yourselves to be wheedled out of your liberty by any pretences of politeness, delicacy, or decency.” Lambasting the “cowardice” many had shown in shying away from public dissent, Adams moves to invoke the essay’s primary figure of speech, an analogy to hydrophobia activated by the material transatlanticism with which he is more literally concerned. Admonishing readers not to be “discouraged by any pretences that malignants on this side the water will represent your paper as factious and seditious, or that the great on the other side the water will take offence at them,” Adams emphasizes that this “dread of representation” has too long had in the colonies “effects very similar to what the physicians call a hydrophobia, or dread of water.” He explains further, “It has made us delirious; and we have rushed headlong into the water, till we are almost drowned, out of simple or phrensical fear of it.” A comparison Adams uses as a pivot point for the essay as a whole, the hydrophobia comparison sutures his opposition to the Stamp Act to an affective hypothesis—in essence, that a fear of misrepresentation was fashioning a kind of protective barrier against open dialogue, thus ensuring the colonies’ ongoing subordination.

Most interesting for our purposes here is the way Adams flirts with coining a new phobic register, a “dread of representation,” in an effort to correct the cowardice of readers. As Jason Frank notes in his reading of the passage, “The revolutionary and postrevolutionary American context,” in which “*A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law*” was written, “was charged with a heightened political awareness and suspicion of representational claims” (14). Frank suggests that Adams thus taps into a sense of “wariness” colonists felt toward “nearly all forms of representation” (85). Frank’s larger

point about representation is well taken, and important to discerning the context for the piece, and yet it begs noticing that Adams invokes a state of mind more precise, medicalized, and debilitating than “wariness” quite encapsulates. A state riddled with “terrors”; characterized by “phrensical fear”; stricken, as Adams later states, with “pusillanimity”; and consisting in a “timidity,” which is “the true source of our sufferings,” the “dread of representation” the analogy targets is by definition beyond reason and unsparingly damaging. While the artfulness of the comparison lies partly in Adams’ play with the imagery of transoceanic submission (to rush “headlong into the water” is to cower to an imperial seat literally an ocean away), the essay also pioneers an emergent emotional sensibility. In appealing to phobia as a medicalized state, Adams reads his fellow colonists as pathological in the resilience of their dread, with the evident intention of soliciting a sense of shame and disillusionment in order to goad readers toward a more healthful emotional response.

Still, Adams only goes so far, resisting, consciously or subconsciously, the next step of forging a taxonomic expression—representophobia, or some prettier portmanteau. It is this subtle space of hesitation I mean to signpost in parenthesizing phobia’s vague interim, prior to its first concrete proliferation. The suffix had not yet run away from home; still, it is evident in Adams’ “Dissertation” and elsewhere that hydrophobia’s elaboration in eighteenth-century nosology was beginning to cultivate interest in a distinct, relatively unexplored form fear might take. Michel Foucault famously writes of this period in medicine that an almost fetishistic obsession with disease classification was taking root. For Foucault, this surge in the print circulation of disease taxonomies, occurring in advance of the rise of an “anatomo-clinical method,” also had a curious

liberating effect on medical knowledge production. “Paradoxically,” he contends, “never was the space of configuration of disease more free, more independent of its space of localization” than with the rise of a “classificatory medicine” that announced into existence its own ubiquitous authority (4). This independence of thought appears to have facilitated a kind of literary, perhaps even formal-critical approach to writing and conceptualizing pathology itself. As Foucault explains further, nosology allowed physicians and lay readers to picture disease as “a space in which analogies define essences” (7). The descriptions or “pictures” of disease provided in a given taxonomy might “resemble things,” yet in the imagined pathological community they conjured, diseases depended equally on apparent kinships with “one another” at the level of symptom and immediate manifestation. This figurative intimacy made possible an elaboration of new forms by “*degree[s]*” of “*resemblance*.” It was in the context of this taxonomical intimacy that phobia began to acquire a nascent relation of adjacency to rabid hydrophobia. The analogy, their structure of kinship, remained vital; however, a new and variable category of pathology began to fester. To borrow the binary offered by Foucault’s influential professor Georges Canguilhem, a new and generative fissure was beginning to spread between the “normal” and the “pathological.”

Eighteenth-century hydrophobia differed from other understandings of fear (philosophical, theological, or otherwise) in that it signaled, or at least invoked the epistemological parameters of, a diagnosable state. That is, it inhered in a discourse governed by nomenclature, as a means of classifying a particular iteration of fear as a state of interior, ontological defect. At last, in the 1780s and 1790s, these connotations of the –phobia suffix began to make a break from rabies, attaching to new objects,

situations, and ideas. *Infectious Affect* will refer to this break as phobia's "first proliferation." Yet what we find in tracking this inaugural period of variation and adaptation is that it occurred within an ambiguously demarcated space between medical literature and popular print entertainment. In this inaugural ambiguity, we encounter a genealogy with evident parallels to phobia's usage today. As subsequent chapters will demonstrate in depth, phobia's diagnostic connotations would begin to exceed the production of strict medical knowledge. That is, phobia's lexical independence began to be tested in popular print venues, not just to speculate on psychological pathology, but for the sake of social commentary and political satire as well. In this emergent relation, across the antebellum period especially, phobia would find an epistemologically fraught, but also reliable niche between seemingly distinct spheres of print consumption.

In popular magazines and newspapers, these novel appropriations frequently come off as playful, as demonstrated in an illustration titled "Kunophobia—The Church in Danger," published in British poet W. H. Harrison's *The Humorist* in 1831 (Fig. 2). Picturing a rector running from a mad dog, who in turn flees a mob of pitchfork-wielding congregants, the illustration appears next to a poem, whose opening stanzas read:

'Mad dog! mad dog!' see there he flies,

Of learning no respecter;

If no one shoot or brain the brute,

He'll surely bite the Rector.

'Mad dog! mad dog!' how fast he runs!

With hundreds at his tail,

Each with some murd'rous weapon arm'd,  
Club, pitchfork, spade, or flail. (258)

Evidently, phobia's usage in this poem serves as a shortcut to extended wordplay. A comical interpretation of the scene described by the speaker—in which congregants chase the mad dog, who in turn pursues the Rector—the caption “Kunophobia—the Church in Danger” takes gratuitous pleasure in imagining that human and nonhuman miscreants have staged a mad, allied coup against church leadership. Yet phobia's popular appropriation could also carry significant weight. Consider, for instance, a spate of newspaper articles and military histories following the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842), which debated over several decades whether the war (a famously disastrous loss for the British, resulting in somewhere between 24,000 and 28,000 casualties) had been incited by a misplaced “Russophobia” on the part of the English, or rather an aggressive Anglophobia displayed by Russia.<sup>5</sup> In such a context, the stakes of phobia's analytical purchase could not have been higher. Nowhere would these serious valences of phobia's usage be put to the test more than in the context of U.S. antislavery. As this dissertation will demonstrate, beginning in the 1830s abolitionists developed the most robust repurposing of the suffix in the antebellum period, cultivating a transatlantic rhetorical trend of citing “colorphobia” and “Negrophobia” as pathologies integral to slavery's

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the following sources: “Our Eastern Relations.” *The Monthly Chronicle; a National Journal of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art* 4 (July-Dec. 1839): 60-68; “Review: *Narrative of a Journey from Herat to Khiva, Moscow, and St. Petersburg during the Late Invasion of Khiva; with some Account of the Court of Khiva and the Kingdom of Khaurism*, By Captain James Abbott.” *Campbell's Foreign Semi-Monthly Magazine, or Select Miscellany of European Literature and Art* 4 (Sep. 1, 1843): 51-54; Mackinnon, Daniel Henry. *Military Service and Adventures in the Far East: Including Sketches of the Campaigns against the Afghans in 1839, and the Sikhs in 1845-6*. London: John Ollivier, 1849.

endurance. By the end of the Civil War, hundreds of articles addressing racial phobia in these terms were circulated on both sides of the Atlantic. One of the most remarkable aspects of this initial proliferation of the –phobia suffix is that even as such phobias gained new rhetorical traction, they continued to depend heavily on an analogy to hydrophobia for their legibility. One of the primary arguments of *Infectious Affect*, accordingly, is that, in the context of phobia’s proliferation in the late 1700s and early nineteenth century, the analogy between new phobias and a hydrophobic symptomatology remained a defining feature of phobia’s signifying potential for far-flung publics.

In the concluding chapters of this dissertation, I demonstrate that only in the context of postbellum neurology, sexology, and microbiology, in the late 1800s, did the lexical kinship between rabies and phobia at last began to attenuate. Two European influences played especially important roles: the work of German psychiatrist Carl Friedrich Otto Westphal beginning in the late 1860s and early 1870s, and the advent of Louis Pasteur’s rabies vaccine in 1885, known for its contribution to establishing the germ theory of disease. Westphal’s introduction of the concept of *agoraphobia*, in 1871, became responsible for prompting a multilingual, transatlantic enumeration of new phobias requiring diagnosis, especially with regard to space and social interaction. In his short collection, *The Uses of Phobia: Essays on Literature and Film* (2010), David Trotter refers to this development as “the invention of agoraphobia,” suggesting that at this juncture phobia began to solicit new attention. Covering phobia’s subsequent evolution, Trotter dubs the last few decades of the 1800s “phobia’s *belle époque*.” However, Trotter never accounts for what came before, or the nature of the shift

agoraphobia introduced. Thus, it remains to be considered how an ensuing influx of taxonomies of phobia on both sides of the Atlantic torqued the category's epistemological standing. Finally, physicians began to identify, classify, and treat new phobias, without there being any evident analogy to hydrophobia as a founding concept associated with pathological fear. Shortly after, with the introduction and dissemination of Pasteur's hydrophobia vaccine in 1885, medical understandings of hydrophobia changed as well. As historians of medicine have long noted, the hydrophobia vaccine became integral to one of the great medical revolutions in modern history: the birth and validation of microbiology as a science. Yet this event in the history of science was equally a philological catalyst. Once rabies was understood to be a microbial agent, susceptible to physical manipulation, hydrophobia, as a legitimate name for the disease, began to fall into decline. Taking this dissolving lexical kinship as its horizon, "Infectious Affect" assumes for its timeline phobia's symbiotic relationship with rabies, as it waxed and waned from the 1760s to the 1880s, and as it began to deteriorate in the decades immediately following.

**A FEELING "BEDAWBED" "WITH SLIME":  
THE HYDROPHOBIA ANALOGY IN THE HISTORY OF EMOTIONS**

In pursuing the origins of phobia's cultural traction as an epistemological framework, this dissertation builds on the work of historians of emotions who have proposed that instead of looking to emotions as transhistorical indices of human perception and experience we should regard them as contingent historical objects, which change in meaning, consequence, and social value over time. This is not to propose the extreme claim that emotions are only linguistic, or that they have a biological basis only



secondarily. Nor is it to deny that continuities of feeling might be shared by different epochs. Nevertheless, it is to suggest that when emotions achieve shared recognition through language and material texts they become social and historical, exceeding the stuff of interior, private phenomena. Moreover, as emotions attract greater attention within imagined communities, they solicit competing theories and incommensurable itinerancies. On the one hand, depression as it is felt and known in the twenty-first century belongs to a different set of affective coordinates than melancholia, as the disease was felt and understood two hundred and fifty years ago, even as their conditions possess evident parallels. However, it is important to acknowledge that depression in the present and melancholia in earlier periods represent sites of contestation themselves, at any given moment. Whatever the terms or context, the phenomena we call “emotion” comprises an array of affective scripts that sometimes aspire to consensus, yet which also tend toward an efflorescence of connotations, rebelling against disciplinary, therapeutic, and otherwise normative parameters. The conditions of phobia’s materialization as a legible, widely variable affect in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century U.S. offer an illustrative example. Thus, this dissertation explores the consolidation of phobia as an object of medical study and cultural adaptation, attending to the contingencies of its production as both a way of knowing and something to be known, while also exploring its variability, with the goal of showing that its ascendancy as a category of social and psychological analysis did not progress without hesitation. On the contrary, early American, antebellum, and nineteenth century phobias possessed a motley collection of meanings, some incompatible with one another, many of which have since slipped out of historical memory.

This dissertation at once engages with and offers alternatives to dominant modes familiar to historians of emotions. In the 1980s, Carol and Peter Stearns famously called upon scholars to attend to the *emotionology* underwriting their archives, a term they used to refer to “the attitudes or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression” (813). It is not difficult to think of neighboring concepts that intersect with this approach to sociality: imagined communities, transnational networks, ideologies, and cosmologies all depend on webs of affection too often neglected in criticism, stigmatized either outright or euphemistically as effeminate, hence superficial, or sequestered to the cerebral acrobatics of a caricatured psychoanalysis. The difference is that seeking out emotionologies, characteristic of different geographies at different historical junctures, foreground the function of emotions and emotive speech acts. In short, historians of emotion insist that neither sociality nor politics is thinkable without the shifting affective networks that sustain bonds within groups.

One of the most common approaches to tracking the history of emotions has been to explore their treatment in major works of philosophy.<sup>6</sup> The implicit relation to a shared, public affective milieu is either that such works distill something pervasive about a moment, or at least represent a valuable intellectual hybridity, in which the history of ideas and shared networks of feeling intertwine. In thinking through the evolution of fear as an object of study, we might be inclined along these lines to explore phobia’s affinities with or deviations from what Thomas Hobbes called “Aversion” as distinguished from “Appetite” in the *Leviathan* (1651). Classed as an “interior beginning of voluntary

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<sup>6</sup> The “Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy” has an especially elaborate section comparing approaches in the history of emotions.

motion,” aversion represents for Hobbes a broadly construed inclination to “turn away from”: a basic “endeavor,” which might take shape as anything from *fear* or “PANIC TERROR” (an unreasoning dread spread via mob mentality) to *courage* or *anger*, the latter of which Hobbes defines as “sudden courage” (24). Much closer to the historical starting point of this dissertation, Edmund Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) famously cites incapacitating fear as integral to aesthetic appreciation. Observing that “astonishment” is the “effect of the sublime in its highest degree,” Burke asserts that terror and the sublime possess a special affinity. Insofar as “[n]o passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as *fear*,” Burke specifies: “Whatever therefore is terrible, with regard to sight, is sublime too, whether this cause of terror be endued with greatness of dimensions or not; for it is impossible to look on anything as trifling, or contemptible, that may be dangerous.” Thus while Hobbes seems to get at phobia’s attachment to things, or rather its function as a cathexis premised upon dread, Burke seems to presage phobia’s ideal totality, an immediacy of terror deprived of a mitigating rationalism.

Evocative as these connections are, *Infectious Affect* will insist on a rather anal commitment to the specificities of phobia as a precise lexical index. Whatever multiplicity of feelings phobia began to comprise over time, it did so for decades while tethered to the figurative dimension of the canine madness analogy. Thus, we run into one of the quandaries at the heart of this dissertation: what should we make of phobia’s figurative properties, when attempting also to track its evolving cultural value as a category of analysis? The paragraphs that follow sketch six areas in which phobia’s status as an emotion caught in the prism of analogy infused its social legibility with substantive

coordinates. In tracking these evolving parameters at the advent of phobia's embryonic lexicality, *Infectious Affect* takes seriously not just the loose coherence these associations helped foster, but equally the rhetorical contestations they enacted, which tore phobia's meaning into divergent, meandering directions early on. By insisting on coherence and contestation in tandem, I adapt a concept famously termed *structures of feeling* by Raymond Williams. When Williams introduced the concept in 1977, it was to get at the phenomenon of how unprecedented affective registers materialize for sociocultural purposes. To foreground the idea, Williams explained that the "strongest barrier" to the analysis of "human cultural activity" is the "immediate and regular conversion of experience into finished products," or "formed wholes rather than forming and formative processes" (128). The problem with this imaginative terminality is that social feelings on the precipice of cohering, in the moment of their becoming, have often eluded scholarly attention. Distinguishing how a phobic imagination emerged in the early republic thus requires that we see it as a structure or shared nexus of sociality, on the one hand, but also as a discursive resource awash with anarchic energies. For Williams, aesthetic objects hold value, in this respect, as vessels through which transformative structures of feeling are tested without yet having ossified. These structures remain distinct from consolidated "forms and institutions...in that although they are emergent or pre-emergent, they do not have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and on action" (131-2). This section outlines a constellation of six formal coordinates, in which phobia's meaning began to achieve a nascent, but also impactful constellation.

(1) **Pathology.** Unlike Hobbesian aversion or Burkean terror, phobia's meaning inhered largely in its status as pathology, and not just pathology, but its status as available nomenclature. As a unit of diagnosis carrying international familiarity, hydrophobia represented a form of disease known primarily for its psychological manifestations, which contributed to an eighteenth-century separation of emotion into normal and pathological types. In advance of the consolidation of psychiatry as an independent branch of medicine in the late nineteenth century, hydrophobia represented a form of mental (if also physiological) illness with which one could be diagnosed; which required medical attention and treatment; and for which, depending on the onset, discovery, and duration of symptoms, one could be hospitalized. One of the best-documented examples of eighteenth-century institutionalization and treatment appears in a long treatise by British physician and member of the Royal College of Physicians Thomas Arnold, titled *A Case of Hydrophobia, Commonly Called Canine Madness*, published in 1793. Here Arnold tells of a ten-year-old girl named Hannah Springthorpe who was brought to the Leicester Infirmary the previous year when, after being attacked by a mad dog, she began to report a "distressing train of symptoms" (1). According to witnesses, the dog, whose fury had been roused in an altercation with other dogs nearby, flew up at Hannah, bit her once in the chest "two inches above the nipple"; "bedawbed" the hand she used to protect herself "with slime from his mouth"; then, at last, managed to break the skin on her forefinger, before scattering away from the scene. A little over a week later, a flurry of symptoms, including hallucinations and, most troublingly, signs of an emergent dread of water, led the family to take Hannah to the Leicester Infirmary for further observation and treatment.

During her stay, Hannah's condition deteriorated steadily. She began to fantasize that dogs and cats were closing in to attack her, would descend regularly into "fits" in which she would snap her jaws at people around her, went back and forth between maniacal laughing and weeping without warning, and descended repeatedly into spasmodic convulsions. However, the most alarming and telltale symptom to show itself before the doctor was a rapidly worsening hydrophobia. Upon hearing a basin of water poured out early on in her stay, she expressed discomfort. During another instance, when coerced into swallowing a glass of water, we learn that "Instantly, her face, and whole body, became convulsed; she turned suddenly around, being then sitting up in bed, and, clapping her hands to her face, threw herself upon her face upon the pillow" (31). Still, nothing appears to have bothered the girl more than the sound of liquids in her vicinity. Details of her reliable dread thus return throughout her case history almost like a refrain. "[T]he pain from the noise of water was very evident," Arnold writes. In another instance, he explains, "The nurse happening to pour out some mint tea incautiously, [Hannah] cried out that it hurt her much, and begged her immediately to desist" (58). By virtue of this dread, above all other symptoms, Arnold discerned he was beholding a case of hydrophobia.

One of the most interesting elements of hydrophobia, as physicians of the eighteenth century understood it, was that it combined instinctual aversion—the classic telltale scene being a patient dashing a vessel of water against a wall or to the ground—with intellectual and even abstract manifestations of the same fear, to the extent that a number of cases report a sense of terror at hearing even the word "water" spoken aloud. Indeed, in another remarkable narrative detailing a case of hydrophobia by a woman

named Elizabeth Bryant, documented by Edmund Burke's own father-in-law, physician Christopher Nugent, we learn the patient dreamed repeatedly of "falling into deep *Pools of Water* and being forcibly kept in" (7). Without a doubt, it would be interesting to explore how Nugent's work on hydrophobia may have influenced his son-in-law's conception of the sublime. Most important to the connotations I want to pursue presently, however, is how, across an array of rabies cases, the central driving element revolved around meeting the expectations of the disease's appellation and best-known symptom. Forged within these associations, phobia would continue in subsequent decades to signify a form of irrational fear steadily exacerbated to the point of a physically debilitating, potentially lethal pathology.

(2) **Lag time.** Even as phobia's medicalization in the context of rabies oriented the emotion within an intricate network of disease classification, hydrophobia signified a unique temporality of disease progression. The onset of this temporality, following the bite of a potentially mad animal, involved a period of uncertain anticipation. In the space of this lag time, in which one might (or might not) be on the verge of succumbing internally to the cruel work of mad saliva, victims experienced a maddening anxiety. A range of remedies might be tried: cauterization, cutting out the flesh around the wound, deer musk, herbal antidotes, bloodletting, mad stones, and the list could go on indefinitely. At the same time, it was widely known that these remedies were hardly foolproof—last-ditch efforts, which some promoted in desperate optimism, yet others dismissed as ineffective. Sometimes called a virus, yet in a context where virus denoted the concept of a "poison" (as opposed to something microbial, as the term would be altered to mean in the 1890s), the infectious agent consisting within a mad animal's

saliva was notoriously deadly. Thus, the question revolved around whether the animal behind the attack was mad or merely irritable, or perhaps sick with an altogether different disease. The period of anticipation generated by this uncertainty reliably produced an interior break in one's experience of time—something queer, even, evocative of what twenty-first century theorists have termed “queer time.” Perhaps no critic has theorized such phenomena better than Elizabeth Freeman, whose interest in intersections between a queer sensibility of time and chronic illness gets at the way sustained or terminal disease effectively works one out of any normative experience of social life. Freeman describes this as a failure to meet the expectations of “chrononormativity,” defined as “the use of time to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity.” The distinguishing element of queer time in early American and transatlantic rabies narratives is that the experience of chronic pathology in everyday life commences not with the reveal of self-evident infection, but rather much earlier, following the animal attack itself. Moreover, this lag time could last indefinitely. While several weeks of incubation was common, physicians regularly reported several months, while still others suggested an interim of years was possible. In 1768, a physician by the name of John Schmid went so far as to report a case where twenty years separated an eight-day death spiral of a woman by the surname Richter and an old dog bite, which the physician took to have caused it. This experience of chronic dread became a touchstone of rabies narratives and, as this dissertation will show, had a lasting influence on the temporality other phobias conjured.

(3) *Contagion*. One of the most complex riddles facing historians of medicine in earlier periods—though some have been more inclined to meet the nuances of its mystery more directly than others—is what physicians and laypersons understood about the



contagious nature of certain diseases prior to the germ theory of disease, or the advent of microbiology. As a very old disease stretching back to antiquity, the history of rabies offers an especially curious node, across disparate periods, in that it has long been known that the bite of a mad dog has the potential to communicate a deadly madness to its recipient. Rabies stands out as an ancient human reference point, to put it another way, for the evolution of what Priscilla Wald has called *outbreak narratives*. Speaking of its post-microbiological, twentieth- and twenty-first-century iterations, Wald describes the outbreak narrative as a “formulaic plot that begins with the identification of an emerging infection, includes discussion of the global networks throughout which it travels, and chronicles the epidemiological work that ends with its containment.” For early Americans, though the germ theory of disease was not operative, contagion a much different concept, and epidemiology an unformed discipline, rabies narratives drew upon a related plot structure. The dog bite made the problem of communicability a paramount concern. The major difference, as noted above, is that the infectious agent of hydrophobia was conceptualized as a poison, analogous to something like snake venom. Yet, just as Wald takes interest in the social ramifications of microbial contagion as a concept—namely that “Disease emergence dramatizes the dilemma that inspires the most basic human narratives: the necessity and danger of human contact”—so did hydrophobia provide a pattern of communicability, which became a valuable metaphor in diverse social contexts. Most important to my argument here, hydrophobia filled out a more capacious phobic sensibility (as well as an understanding of other sundry affects) with the threat of infectivity and the possibility of epidemic dissemination. That is, hydrophobia became an important template for conceptualizing the contagion of human emotion

broadly—what Teresa Brennan has called the “transmission of affect” (5). As the coinage of new phobias accelerated across the nineteenth century, this threat of infectivity—the plausibility, moreover, of an emotion’s lurking, swelling social ubiquity—continued to evolve as a defining aspect of phobia’s signification.

(4) **Zoonosis.** Today, rabies is known for being a kind of *zoonosis* or, as the *OED* defines the term, “A disease which can be transmitted naturally from animals to humans.” This aspect of hydrophobia was self-evident to early Americans as well. As such, hydrophobia represented an emotion that threw into question the fantasy of human difference and the hermetic integrity of the species. Succumbing to hydrophobia signified the shame not just of losing one’s sanity and faculties of perception, but, moreover, of becoming *beastly*. In some of the best rabies scholarship written in recent decades, Kathleen Kete explores this facet of nineteenth-century hydrophobia in French contexts. In a virtuosic essay titled, “*La Rage* and the Bourgeoisie,” Kete observes that the specter of canine-to-human transmission in French accounts made the disease an apt site for interrogating modern distinctions between nature and culture. In short, if “Rabies transformed man into beast, wild, uncontrollable, and dangerous” (91), the implication seemed to be that those qualities lie just below the surface of civilization, always awaiting activation. Kete suggests that anxieties surrounding hydrophobia thus formed a special repository for a general sense of precariousness at the heart of bourgeois subjectivity. “Fear of rabies,” she explains, “is revealing of the implosive nature of the bourgeois interior”—the possibility, that is, that “its demolition” could come “not from without but from within” (90). Wherever hydrophobia touched down, demolition was,

indeed, swift. Pulling from an impressive array of case reports, Kete illustrates her argument with breathtaking detail,

Beastly impulses, emptied systematically out of domestic life, slipped back in to fill the interstices between phantasmagoria with devastating effect. In the haven that was home, insults, blasphemies, shrieks—‘horrifying howls’—issued forth from the sickroom. Biting and hitting, the sick family member overturned everything within reach, shattering the bric-a-brac of predictability. Exhibiting prodigious strength, the patient could easily break the most secure restraint. Defying gravity, he bounced about the room; ‘leaping, skipping, bounding distances with stunning dexterity,’ he would drop just as suddenly, ‘like a rock,’ into death. The rabid fit was the denouement of the narrative pathology of the disease, ‘the moving spectacle of a fit,’ those scenes of ‘the last hour’ that, as played by contemporaries, ‘leave such a profound impression that it is impossible for witnesses to free themselves from its recall.’ (91-2)

Emphasizing the effect this had on perceptions of private interiority for French subjects, Kete concludes, convincingly, “The bourgeois imagination routinely became entangled in this aspect of rabies, and the impression that so disturbed the nineteenth century was the image of a bourgeois self out of control” (92). In short, hydrophobia indicated that bourgeois civility might be nothing more than the playacting of unseemly creatures, for whom rabidity was more the rule than the exception.

Nowhere did this theme come through with more terrifying force than in accounts where hydrophobia was reported to have spread via human-on-human attacks. Perhaps no

better case exemplifies this perceived threat of human-to-human transmission than one reported in *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* in 1832. Reported by a Reverend William Case, the article explains that in 1807, an eleven-year-old boy referred to as W.C. “was bitten and wounded by a mad dog” (2). As W.C. grew up without symptoms, it was assumed that he somehow escaped the attack without becoming rabid himself. But fifteen years later the disease appeared to surface. “During the progress of the disease,” the reverend explains, “he gnashed his teeth, discharged large quantities of saliva, had distressing spasms, and was set on biting every body and every thing.” At the same time, this drive to bite appeared not entirely automatic. “He watched for opportunities to bite persons,” readers learn, “and if he could bite any one it seemed to afford him pleasure, and was followed by laughing.” W.C. died fifteen days later, on September 1, 1822, but not before successfully attacking three persons.

The article reports that all three of W.C.’s victims later developed symptoms and died. A man referred to as L.T.C. appeared to succumb to the disease four years later. Again, the sickness lasted around two weeks before he perished, involved a dread of “water” and “drinks,” and brought on a strong inclination for biting other people. In one instance, he bit a person attending to him, then immediately apologized, explaining, “Now I have hurt you, and I am sorry; but I could not avoid it; I must either die myself or bite you” (3). A witness recalled, “If he had not been confined...I have no doubt he would have bitten every person in the room.” The second of W.C.’s victims died the following year. So great was this individual’s dread of water he implored a friend to keep him at a distance from a nearby lake, believing it “would kill him.” The third victim to fall ill was W.C.’s own brother, referred to as C.C., who developed symptoms the

following year. During an interval of rational consciousness, C.C. is said to have warned his wife, “I wish you to keep away from me when I have these turns; I know not why it is, but I want to bite, and I fear I shall bite you” (4). On another incident, C.C. welcomed a visiting neighbor, saying, ““How do you do, Mr. B—? I am glad to see you. Come here; I want to shake hands with you.”” No sooner did the neighbor extend his hand that C.C. “seized it instantly, and with a convulsive spring rose from the lying posture and drew it to his mouth” (4). Most disturbing about the anecdote is how smoothly the disease could assume a guise of cognitive normality. Despite this sustained ability to converse with bystanders, C.C., like the others, soon died. This tendency toward hostility, accompanied by the danger of human-to-human transmission, made hydrophobia a favorite example for the communicability of emotion in myriad contexts. Representing not only a basic risk of contagion, the disease demonstrated the possibility for infection, by and as emotion, to be staged over the dissolution of common civility.<sup>7</sup> In the worst-case scenarios, citizens might find themselves pitted against other citizens beyond their self-control. As the hydrophobia analogy began to permeate antebellum debate pertaining to racial, religious, and ethnic prejudice, the threat of humans tearing at one another, in the

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<sup>7</sup> For other instances in which hydrophobia was used as a metaphor in these terms, see a string of articles and accompanying illustrations published in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* in the 1860s (Figs. 3 & 4). The first depicts a scene in which a potential thief accosted a wealthy gentleman in Manhattan one day, biting his possessions and claiming to be hydrophobic. On suspicion it was merely a ruse, a bystander escorted the potentially rabid stranger to the police. In a second image titled “A Rabid Woman,” we discover an Irish woman named Martha Connelly who, after being arrested for public drunkenness during a parade one afternoon, swiftly bit the police officer on his hand. Subsequently, in court, Mary explained to the judge she wished she had been rabid, so that she might “have been the cause of the officer’s death.” In each story, the writer for *Frank Leslie's* uses the alarm of an apparently performative hydrophobic attack to sensationalize otherwise relatively mundane events. In each case, the strongest theme appears to be economic, indicating that to be of a lower-class status is tantamount to being more susceptible to a sudden descent into animal savagery.

manner of rabid dogs, would constitute one of the most compelling metaphorical referents undergirding phobia's rhetorical charge.<sup>8</sup>

(5) **Parable.** As Wald emphasizes in her analysis of the outbreak narrative, it is valuable to acknowledge that the logic of communicability always implies, rather vitally, a converse, optimistic scenario: the possibility of impeding further infection through human cooperation. On the one hand, narratives of human hydrophobia disturbed this mandate, insofar as they insisted on a caveat—the possibility that a disease or emotion might have, as one of its basic symptoms, an agential inclination toward the deliberate infection of neighboring bodies. Nevertheless, the spectacular communicability of hydrophobia made the possibility of prevention obvious and urgent, long before the mid-nineteenth-century emergence of epidemiology on a grand scale. This optimism became crucial to phobia's evolving popularity as a suffix too. Case histories of hydrophobia lent themselves easily to parables dealing with violence, lurking malice, and the importance of overcoming one's worst fears. Children's books provide quick insight into this facet of phobia's lexical traction. Consider, for instance, a story titled "Poor Bessy," published in Peabody & Co.'s *The Infants' Annual, Or, A Mother's Offering* in 1832 (Fig. 5). The story begins with a young girl, Annette, asking her mother why she recently let a tear fall at the mention of a vague loved one named "Bessy." At last, the mother explains that Bessy was the name of a late pet dog who had saved Annette's life when she was just a

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<sup>8</sup> It is important to acknowledge that many physicians would have likely rejected the string of cases, ascribing them to a malady other than hydrophobia. Anticipating such doubts, the author of the article concludes with a postscript, noting, "An intelligent medical man, who has heard the above statements, and conversed largely with witnesses, believes these cases to have been hydrophobia." No matter the article's proximity to prevailing opinion, however, its publication in a respected medical and surgical journal offers a valuable sense of how hydrophobia became associated with a particularly devastating descent into madness.

year old. In brief, a stray dog who had been roaming the neighborhood suddenly lunged at Annette one afternoon. “[M]y unconscious innocent!” the mother recalls as the feelings rush back. “[Y]our destruction seemed certain,” the mother goes on. Right on cue, however, the family’s loyal dog Bessy steps in. “Bessy, whom I had not before observed darted between you and the destroyer, and seized him by the throat.” Annette’s life was saved, but Bessy was “torn in the struggle.” Rather than narrate the mercy killing that ensued, the mother tells her child, “[D]o not ask any more, my love, poor Bessy died that night!” (29-30). On cue, Annette falls sobbing “on her mother’s bosom.” She asks to be reminded, whenever she is discovered being “bad,” of Bessy’s sacrifice. From here the children’s story turns theological rather abruptly: Bessy is sanctified as a Christ figure, whose memory should be taken as a sign of sacrifice and God’s generous providence in tandem. Yet the story also dramatizes how rabies narratives possessed a range of archetypal cues from which aphorisms could be smoothly derived. After all, Bessy’s intervention represents equally the courage necessary to protect loved ones from evil interlopers, as well as the terrible precarity in engaging evil so directly, as if by the throat. Indeed, it is Bessy’s willful proximity that facilitates her own subsequent demise—what Annette’s mother calls “the dreadful distemper” that tends toward cruel multiplication in the climax of the mad dog’s bite. Through the interplay of these resonances, phobia attained value as a framework for interpreting fear’s surreptitious movement through the public sphere.

(6) *Negation*. The last element of phobia’s early signification needing emphasis is its status as a negative emotion premised, paradoxically enough, on a visceral and lasting cathexis to the object or quality feared. By negative, I mean to invoke a broad category of

emotion comparable to Sianne Ngai's use of the word "negative" as a near synonym for what she means by "ugly" in *Ugly Feelings* (2005). For Ngai, negative might signify an array of affective relationalities: "dysphoric or experiential[]" emotions, meaning those that correspond to "pain" or "displeasure"; "semantic" negativity, in the sense that they elicit social disapproval or even "stigmatiz[ation]"; as well as, a broader sense of formal or "syntactical[]" negativity, in the sense of conjuring a state of "repulsion rather than attraction, by phobic strivings 'away from' rather than philic strivings 'toward'" (11). All of these definitions fit phobia's early signification self-evidently enough. Nevertheless, the form of negativity I want to accentuate most is the formal quality, which Ngai even takes to be fundamentally "phobic" in structure. On the one hand, one of the most evocative elements of phobia's status as an emotion inhering primarily in the linguistic function of a suffix, is that to describe its movement merely as a striving "away from" is to miss the point. Phobia's pulling away cannot finally be extricated from the irony of its enduring attachment—the urgency of its push toward—a cathexis phobias distill in the very bipartite structure of their names. Indeed, no phobia conveys this irony better than hydrophobia itself—a dread deeply disturbing because it betrays our necessary draw toward that very chemical compound, the source of all life. Yet, the negativity phobia conjures is striking in still another way, in that historically its negativity has a long tradition of eliciting a counter-negativity among early Americans—an imperative to answer its constitutive repugnance with another repugnancy, fashioned from the other side.

Nowhere in early American and antebellum literature does this doubling effect come through better than in phobia's cooptation by social satire. As noted above, one of



the most important shifts in phobia's meaning in the late eighteenth century occurred at an intersection of proto-psychiatric speculation and social commentary, in which experimentation with phobia as variable pathology intersected perpetually with wordplay and pun-making. In the context of this speculative satire, one of the first stable qualities of phobia's affective value was its implicit reference to a dialectic, in which phobia became something to be uprooted from civil society. Phobia's reference became enmeshed equally with what we might call an *anti-phobic* imagination, in which the imperative to combat phobia's social side effects garnered a political consensus of its own. Perhaps nothing demonstrates the rhetorical familiarity of this dialectical relation better than a piece of ephemera published in New York in 1839, which may have very well had abolitionism's burgeoning discourse on racial phobia in mind. Titled "The Diaria of Freedom; Or, The Anti-Hydrophobian Thunderbolt," the document imitates an inaugural publication for a startup newspaper. Subtitled "A Weakly [sic] Bulletin, published every half hour, or oftener, as occasion may demand," the paper devolves swiftly into gags and quips (some clever, others "weakly" indeed), all under the banner of a new "Anti-Hydrophobia" party ticket, supported by the likes of "Hydrogen & Co." and "Saveall, Lockup, & Co." Addressed to the party's "Most Grandificatibillatorious Members!!" the paper summarizes their mission, as formed in December 1838: "WE made manifestatiously apparent OUR intentional purposes to continue to advocate the glorious causes of intentional purposes to continue to advocate the glorious causes of ANTI-HYDROPHOBINARIANISM, Freedom, and universal resurrection from the gauling and double-copperhead-bottled chain cables of common reason, and spurious cents." Most interesting is that in its absurdist, apparently indiscriminate approach to

social parody, the *Thunderbolt* takes as its object of critique newspaper appeals to political anxiety as a more capacious genre: a veritable “diarrhea” of rhetoric, aimed less at coherent content than reliable affective cues. Erring on the side of on-the-nose one liners, the party mission concludes: “Fellow Members! WE know every thing, and you know more than WE do!!!” The implicit riddle of the document seems to be this: is political panic organic (hence inevitable) or imagined and made viral through print media? For important reasons, the question was weighing on people’s minds in the late 1830s, as Jessica Lepler’s *The Many Panics of 1837* and other works on the 1837 financial crisis have capably demonstrated. Still, it is worth acknowledging the precise figurative register through which fear and fear-mongering are here invoked: the hydrophobia analogy, which the editor of the *Anti-Hydrophobian Thunderbolt* (with too much time on his or her hands, admittedly) found pithy, self-explanatory, and witty enough to invoke for an extended laugh. Whatever the intended referent (abolitionism or something else), what stands out as most useful in the piece is its attention to phobia’s doubling effect: its status not just as negation (in this case hydrophobia as a metaphor for political angst), but, moreover, its solicitation of a contrary negation (i.e. an anti-hydrophobian platform). By 1839, it was possible for the joke to be made that wherever political fear and fearmongering might be found lurking, so too could an organized, anti-phobic effort to isolate that barbarism for treatment. By the late 1700s, this compounded negation had already started to emerge as an important feature of phobia’s vernacular cachet. Across the nineteenth century, an emergent dialectic between phobic and anti-phobic imaginaries continued to adapt alongside phobia’s evolving sensibility, in each of the literary contexts this dissertation will explore.

**PHOBIA, MANIA, PHILIA:  
RETHINKING EMOTIONS HISTORY AS QUEER PHILOLOGY**

The six coordinates elaborated above reappear in different forms across this dissertation. While the chapters will only rarely touch on actual cases of infectious hydrophobia, the spheres of print circulation considered repeatedly draw upon a corresponding symptomatology at the level of analogy, in their experimentation with the analytical potential of a wider phobic imagination. This ongoing correspondence gestures to an additional area of inquiry I have yet to touch upon adequately: the relationship between emotion and language. Phobia's proliferation as an analytic unfolded not just at the level of immediate feeling, but as an idea intimately bound up with a prefatory, genealogical referent. In this relationship, the contingencies of phobia's appearance in early American and antebellum writing speak to a quandary historians of emotion have long taken up. Does emotion precede language and thus beckon our description? Or does language shape emotion in a much more fundamental way, setting parameters on what feelings can be expressed, recognized, and shared within imagined communities? In the case of an emotion understood to lie at the heart of democracy's interior maneuverings, these questions turn out to have profound implications regarding how political energies move and acquire legibility. Adding to the questions posed above, we might inquire further: is human emotion primordial in its forms, kinds, and intensities, constituting the stuff with which diverse governmentalities must always grapple? Or do rhetorics of governmentality concretely shape the affective repertoires of political subjects, determining through language the kinds of feelings available to recognize, sanction, and perform civic belonging?

In pursuing ambiguities of emotional experience at the center of these inquiries, this dissertation attempts to track and discover the role played by language, emphasizing, moreover, the interest early American and antebellum writers took in this same idea: the material imbrication of language within phenomenologies of feeling. In terms of tracking such relationships, I want to use this final section to propose a method comparable to what Jeffrey Masten has termed “queer philology,” in his 2016 book by the same name. Far from being limited to early modern terminologies pertaining to gender, sexuality, and the body, the *queerness* of Masten’s philology gestures to the possibility of a greater sea change in the discipline, in which the study of the history of language, writ large, might be re-conceptualized in terms of the queer attractions, compulsions, and intimacies that make language possible. Masten notes that the discipline of philology has long depended on the rather limited metaphor of the nuclear, heterosexual family to get at the way words enter into partnerships, produce and foster the maturation of younger lexicons, and cohere in normative microcosms, like so many families clustered in a map of etymological suburbs. Against these facile comparisons, *Queer Philologies* asks: what would it mean to “denaturalize these powerful rhetorics” (20)? As Masten writes further, “there is rarely philology without sex,” “rarely...an analysis of language and textual transmission, contamination, and correction that does not draw upon or intersect with terms from the lexicons of sex, gender, reproduction, the body, and the family” (20). Yet, as Masten goes on to note, when we look closely at the way words interact, we discover, moreover, that these transmissions, contaminations, and corrections err toward queer meanderings, vagrancies, and polyphonies, so much so that the queerness of language appears to be the rule rather than the exception.

Such a view of language illuminates the strange contingencies by which phobia first entered and began to solicit interest in the early American public sphere. As noted above, phobia's early signification as a –suffix on the cusp of versatility found validation by way of analogy, as though a parasite at once devoted to its host and eager to infect neighboring bodies. Yet phobia's relationality would prove queerer still in the context of an affective triad that became equally vital to its signification in nineteenth-century writing. In this triad, phobia's meaning became more firmly established by its differentiation from two other pathologies of attraction familiar in early American print media: the suffixes –mania, meaning a totalizing madness characterized by an obsession with a person, object, or idea, and –philia, signifying a more precise pathology of hyperbolic love. For every coinage of a new phobia in Anglophone letters, manic and philic obsessions could be conjured as intuitive counterparts. Thus, as abolitionists developed a discourse around colorphobia and Negrophobia in antislavery writing, so did proslavery advocates soon return the charge with reference to “Negromania” and “Negrophilism” as diseases of the mind endemic to the North. As subsequent chapters will show, so intrinsic was this inclination toward tripartite wordplay—in the context of serious political rebuttal, as well as in lighter pieces debating, for instance, the cultural merits of “polkaphobia” and “polkamanía”—that phobia's meaning cannot be theorized adequately apart from these neighboring cathexes. In each entity lay the trinity, potentially if not explicitly.

Nevertheless, to conceptualize this triad only or even primarily as polyamory would be to neglect the ambivalence of the relationality of these terms. Clearly enough, the longevity of their attachment to one another had to do with their very linguistic status

as diverse forms of attachment—a function their promiscuity as suffixes repeatedly made visible in print. Yet their divergent claims to attachment, which is to say the stark differentiation of their particular inclination toward or away from persons, objects, and ideas, meant that the triad became familiar to early Americans as a collective of mismatched orientations. The wordplay phobias, manias, and philias fostered reveled in spaces of incompatibility and discord. Doing a history of phobia from the perspective of queer philology makes it possible to take all of these tendencies, ambivalences, and disinclinations into account, as constitutive of an experimental word family open to deviant permutations. Like one fond of the leash, phobia remained fixed to the hydrophobia analogy, yet also became, in the vicinity of mania and philia, one of three nodes by which early Americans conceptualized their vulnerability to the most irrational and recidivistic of outward orientations.

Philology is itself a term that circulated in the vicinity of these emotive coordinates across the nineteenth century, of course. Though introducing rather than concluding the word, the *philo-* of philology conjures a discipline unremitting in its love of *logos*. As the *OED* puts it, philology represents “Love of learning and literature; the branch of knowledge that deals with the historical, linguistic, interpretative, and critical aspects of literature; literary or classical scholarship.” In this sense, it becomes necessary to stipulate that philology describes a discipline of which any authentic history of phobias will also have to maintain a healthy skepticism. Indeed, logocentric as this dissertation’s obsession with the history of a word’s political action may seem, *Infectious Affect* also borrows some of its orientation from the term under scrutiny—specifically, the element of *negation*, referred to above, by which phobia has consistently been positioned as a

political feeling necessitating isolation, critique, and dialectical anxiety among American progressives. To the extent that *Infectious Affect* endeavors to tell a particular history of liberalism—the stakes of my analysis, however focused and historical, being cathected to a horizon of critical theory and queer activism of the present—the most compelling early American and antebellum texts I explore partake of a comparable skepticism. From U.S. antislavery to postbellum sexology, we discover repeatedly that the same figures who witnessed and sometimes participated in phobia’s steady entrenchment in American politics often also resisted the imperative to position fear, unequivocally, as democracy’s antithetical other. Persisting in this tradition, *Infectious Affect* pursues a queer philology that is just as much, if not more so, a *logophobia*, a queer anxiety about the tendency of words to become cemented in discourses of progressivism, to lose their dynamism, and to become objects of an unquestioned love. This dissertation goes so far as to suggest that the *logophobia* integral to the phobic imagination in American literature has a long history of being the defining feature of a corresponding phobic aesthetic. Through this aesthetic, the paradox of an anxiety constituting both one’s investment in and skepticism of politics shaped a remarkable, multifaceted tradition in U.S. fiction, poetry, visual media, and other forms of print exchange, which this dissertation will aim to recover.

## THE CHAPTERS

In the introduction to *Regulating Aversion*, Wendy Brown observes that the concept of tolerance in philosophy and ethics has been conceptualized as “an individual virtue, issuing from and respecting the value of moral autonomy, and acting as a sharp rein on the impulse to legislate against morally or religiously repugnant beliefs and behaviors” (8-9). Brown explains further that, in Western history, tolerance has been

regarded as “the offspring of classical liberalism and, more precisely, as a product of the bloody early modern religious authority that initiated the prising apart of political and religious authority and the carving out of a space of individual autonomy from both” (9). Yet, in becoming so sutured to liberalism, tolerance has also become imbricated with power in complex ways. To the extent that tolerance talk pervades politics and has become manifest as a “moral-political practice of governmentality,” Brown argues that “tolerance has significant cultural, social, and political effects that exceed its surface operations of reducing conflict” and “its formal foals and self-representation” and may even be said to participate, at times, in propping up “homophobia,” “ethnic hatreds,” and “racist state violence” (9). At the same time, the point of Brown’s study is not that tolerance has become uniformly destructive, but rather that it has become “protean in meaning,” which is to say “historically and geographically variable in purpose contents, agents, and objects” (4). Building on Brown’s work, *Infectious Affect* observes that in tandem with tolerance phobia has become, over time, a default expression for flagging unenlightened “repugnances” to social difference. Like Brown, I read the rhetoric around phobia as protean, unwieldy, and, at times, complicit in the persistence of structural violence against the same communities on whose behalf it has been fashioned. However, this book argues further for the necessity of historicizing the effects of a phobic imagination on the public sphere, not just as a set of rhetorical tropes and maneuvers, but, more comprehensively, as an affective regime in the making. That is, in addition to inquiring into how progressives speak or have spoken, *Infectious Affect* is also about the importance of understanding the affective contingencies by which political communities



have been imagined and sustained, and what kinds of political feelings have been exiled in the process.

Indeed, the chapters of this dissertation take less interest in writers who played by the slowly consolidating rules of a phobic imagination than it does with those who contested its hegemony or took it down counterintuitive pathways. The writing was on the wall: phobia represented a new way of comprehending the failures of democracy. The most remarkable works to confront its rise as a category of analysis did so by repurposing it against the grain. My first chapter, “Hydrophobia’s Doppelgänger: The Specter of Spontaneity in Early American Rabies Narratives” begins by exploring in greater depth how medical debates around hydrophobia contributed to forming a modern definition of phobia as a psychological disease. Looking to medical literature of the 1700s and early 1800s, I show how outbreaks in the Americas—in Haiti in 1783, Jamaica in 1784, and Peru in 1803/04—began to be cited as proof that rabies could erupt without any catalyzing bite, a subspecies of the disease known as “spontaneous hydrophobia.” In turning to John Neal’s short story “The Haunted Man” at the end of the chapter, however, I argue that Neal uses the story to theorize the power of a transatlantic, hemispheric medical print culture not merely to circulate knowledge about disease, but also, and more disconcertingly, to spread new psychological states in unsuspecting reading publics.

My second chapter, “Satire Distilled: Negrophobia Vs. Negro-Equality Phobia, in the Newspapers of Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and Lydia Maria Child” shows how abolitionists developed a rhetorical tradition premised on colorphobia and Negrophobia to posit an affective basis for race prejudice and the persistence of slavery. As noted above, the terms thrived on an increasingly familiar analogy to rabies in the

madness, aggression, and specter of contagion the disease was known to foment. At the same time, the terms' early satirical uses quickly gave way to a polyphony of adaptations. At times, colorphobia was invoked in a clearly figurative vein, to portray bigotry as comparable to the temperament of a rabid dog. At other times, the concept was used to frame racial phobia as a genuinely pathological state of mind. In still other contexts, as the terms evolved, they began to be taken up as synonymous with race prejudice—readymade neologisms in which the tie to medical nomenclature appeared implicit or beside the point. Rather than seeing these uses as divisible from one another, I argue that they coalesced in a dynamic assemblage. More precisely, color-phobia's literal, figurative, and euphemistic connotations combined to form a hybrid genre I describe as a diagnostic parable.

My third chapter “Revulsion, for Stowe: The Goblin Growth of Analogy in *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*” explores how a number of abolitionists nevertheless began to challenge colorphobia's analytical purchase. One of the strongest reservations among critics targeted the pity embedded in colorphobia's diagnostic connotations. To depict slavery as diseased, certain writers suggested, was nearly to exculpate the slaveholding South and its political allies as victims of anxiety. Alongside this critique, still others resisted colorphobia as a category of analysis because it foretold a public sphere reduced to psychological pseudo-diagnostics, where progressives would have as their first responsibility an eradication of mental illness from civil society. It was in dialogue with this rhetorical climate, I argue, that Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote her second novel *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856). A novel that makes use of the hydrophobia analogy to various ends, it nevertheless resists the rhetoric of racial

phobia. Far from pathologizing fear, Stowe uses the novel to reinvent and repurpose “dread,” phobia’s closest antebellum synonym, as a political feeling. Most explicitly, Stowe stages this recuperation homonymically in the black outlaw protagonist Dred himself, whose militant resistance in the North Carolina swamplands positions a swelling sense of dread, among proslavery supporters, as the affective key to slave revolt.

The last two chapters of the project focus on how phobia and rabies began at last to decouple in the last decades of the century. In the fourth chapter, “Before Homophobia: *Horror Feminae* and Early Sexual Conversion Therapy, after Westphal’s *Konträre Sexualempfindung*}, I observe that the rise of sexology (in which Westphal, inventor of *agoraphobia*, was likewise an influential thinker) contributed simultaneously to a new vocabulary around morbid fears. The chapter shows how the idea of *horror feminae*, or a dread of intercourse with women, became integral to the way figures including Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis understood homosexuality and other neighboring sexual deviations. During these same years, New York neurologist George Miller Beard included in his taxonomy of morbid fears a condition he called “Gynophobia” [sic], defined as a dread of women. Inspired by Beard’s concept, Harvard Professor of Medicine and Fireside poet Oliver Wendell Holmes organized the plot of his final novel *A Mortal Antipathy* (1885) around a patient history of gynophobia. Moving to an analysis of *A Mortal Antipathy*, I show how the novel conducts imaginative experiments in what we would today identify as sexual conversion therapy. However, I emphasize simultaneously that the novel clarifies how homosexuality’s association with a phobic sensibility initially allowed it a more seamless proximity to asexuality and other forms of deviance contrary to normative imperatives to romantic attachment. In essence,

it was only by slightly adapting the logic of compulsory heterosexuality, to imagine another kind of stable orientation, that homosexuality at last became legible and a category unto itself.

In the epilogue to “Infectious Affect,” I demonstrate that the dissolution of phobia’s allegorical connotations was soon after accelerated by the introduction of Pasteur’s rabies vaccine. A medical breakthrough remembered for its contribution to the birth of microbiology, it dramatically altered the way physicians understood hydrophobia as a disease. The consequence was that the phobic imagination in which rabies had played a pivotal role was driven to shed its allegorical association. In this final chapter, I observe briefly how Silas Weir Mitchell, Sigmund Freud, and Zora Neale Hurston variously registered this shift by engaging with a dread of micro-contaminations, or what had begun to be known in the late 1800s as *mysophobia*. To demonstrate how phobia and rabies were effectively decoupled in this context, I conclude by noting that while cultural appropriations of phobia persisted in the twentieth century, they did so without the symbolic sensibility that had first given the suffix traction. Two inoculations, one clinical, the other lexical, joined forces. The spectacular assemblage hydrophobia represented—of fear and aggression, of phenomenological isolation and social contagion—began to simplify into a sterilized analytical frame.

What was lost at this juncture is a question largely beyond the frame of this project. However, the writings explored in the following chapters offer some indication. As a contested structure of feeling, uniting satire with a will to know the concealed machinations of civil society, an early American phobic imagination was largely about sacrificing rhetorical familiarity, the terms and ideas that had been tried before, for

structures of feeling that could not be swallowed easily. Moreover, as antebellum uses of phobia began to fashion a new, formally complex aesthetic, the objective for the most discerning figures I consider was less to land upon a default, habitual liberal theory of emotion, than to reckon with the potential uses of fear in engaging political impasses. Taking this counterintuitive stance invited risks, without a doubt. Yet the writings explored in this dissertation demonstrate that this reckoning, the embrace of a phobic imagination, made it possible to pioneer alternative political communities as well—to create in the context of a shared precariousness relational modes designed to repurpose the very emotions wrought by and through systematic inequality and violence. Phobia's burgeoning lexicality in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century print media took shape in the lacunae between these impulses of resistance and embrace. The legacy of these contestations rolls off the tongue presently. Through a practice of slow etymology, the protracted cathexis of a queer logophobia, *Infectious Affect* reenounters scenes of an earlier grappling, a constellation of alien contingencies, in which we are likely to find ourselves unfamiliar, and less certain of what to feel.

## CHAPTER 1

### HYDROPHOBIA'S DOPPELGÄNGER: THE SPECTER OF SPONTANEITY IN EARLY AMERICAN RABIES NARRATIVES

Infection in the sentence breeds  
We may inhale Despair  
At distances of Centuries  
From the Malaria —

- Emily Dickinson, poem 1261

As noted in the introduction, competing theories spread to explain how Charles Lennox, 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Richmond, fell prey to hydrophobia the night of August 26, 1819. Some claimed he had received the fatal injury after separating a rabid fox from a wounded hound; others claimed the Governor General had been infected by his own beloved dog, Blucher. However, this chapter introduces another mystery, which repeatedly compromised the idea that hydrophobia was always a signifier of some previous rabid transmission. In fact, one of the most peculiar assumptions about hydrophobia, popular from the eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, is that neither account of infection would have been necessary to Lennox's diagnosis. Prior to theories of contagion affiliated with the germ theory of disease, which would not gain notable traction till the mid-1800s, it was common for physicians to attribute hydrophobia to a diverse array of causes. While communicability by a mad animal's bite was certainly the most well-known explanation, other narratives of infection were understood to hold water too. During these decades, debates over hydrophobia's potential detours into human consciousness became a profoundly influential touchstone for early American conceptions of phobia as a more general form of mental illness.

Consider, for instance, a series of cases reported by a physician named Christian Frederic Selcge in 1762, in which hydrophobia seized patients who could not recall ever having been bitten. For one of his examples, Selcge cites the mysterious case of a “shoemaker’s wife, who had been to wash an hide at the river” (102). The doctor explains that when her companions departed as night fell, the woman was seized with a sudden panic at having been left alone, which evolved over the next few days into an ever-worsening hydrophobia. “[F]rom that time she could no more swallow liquids,” Selcge explains, “and when anything of that kind was brought before her, she seemed to be in danger of suffocation.” By the end not even “the sight of fluids” was tolerable, and on the eighth day of the malady she “expired.” Nearly a century later, in 1850, Dr. David Francis Condie of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia reports a similar case. Condie tells of a shipyard overseer named Willets, thirty-five years old, who awoke one morning with severe neck pain. “Feeling thirsty,” Condie explains, “[Willets] took a tumbler of water in his hand, but on attempting to swallow some, was seized with a most painful sense of suffocation, followed instantly by a general spasm” (Case 456). Symptoms worsened, but Willets remained conscious of his surroundings. Condie notes Willets could even display the malady on command: “To show me the manner in which it affected him, he seized a glass of water which stood upon the bureau in his room, and by a sudden jerking motion, brought it to his lips; on attempting to swallow a few drops, he became violently convulsed; threw his limbs about in a wild, agitated manner; his eyes staring wildly open; his face assuming a dark hue, and his whole chest heaving as of one in the agony of suffocation” (Condie 457). Nevertheless, while the condition seemed obvious, Willets insisted he had not in the last eighteen years received any bite or wound

from an animal. After close inspection, his doctor confirmed no trace of a prior attack could be detected. Even so, after three days of suffering Willets died. Strange as these conditions seemed, both Selcg and Condie had a name for the malady they witnessed: as Condie wrote in his account, “It was unquestionably a case of spontaneous hydrophobia” (486).

This chapter contextualizes phobia’s emergence as a broader subject of medical study by reconstructing and reencountering the riddle posed by the shoemaker’s wife, Willets, and others like them. By the mid-to-late eighteenth century, a large number of the most influential physicians in Europe and the Americas considered the condition Selcg and Condie identify as “spontaneous hydrophobia”—defined as a form untraceable to a bite, scratch, or comparable means of transmission—to be a serious phenomenon. As Neil Pemberton and Michael Worboys note briefly in their history of rabies in Britain, physicians and “lay ‘experts’” alike began pursuing the idea that hydrophobia could seize subjects as a purely “mental disease” (2).<sup>9</sup> However, the extent of this phenomenon’s influence has yet to be acknowledged. This chapter proposes that attempts to explain the phenomenon of spontaneous hydrophobia in the 1700s and early 1800s not only influenced interpretations of rabies, but also played the greatest role in developing phobia into a legible concept and category of psychological study. As the belief that hydrophobia could strike by means other than infection became common, the classification came to signify the first widespread use of the *-phobia* suffix in the English language to designate a state of self-sufficing pathological fear. In the 1780s and 1790s, as *-phobia* began to be

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<sup>9</sup> See also Bill Wasik and Monica Murphy’s *Rabid: A Cultural History of the World’s Most Diabolical Virus* (2012), and Kathleen Kete’s “La Rage and the Bourgeoisie: The Cultural Context of Rabies in the Nineteenth Century.” *Representations*, vol. 22, Spring 1988, pp. 89-107.



adapted as a versatile suffix capable of attaching to new objects and ideas, the concept's origins in the literature on rabies would continue to play a profound role in shaping the discursive associations phobia accrued.

To demonstrate the full significance of this etymological turn, this chapter continues the work begun in the introduction of integrating methods in the history of medicine with a growing field of scholarship known as the history of the emotions. As Susan Matt and Peter Stearns observe in *Doing Emotions History* (2013), scholarship in the history of emotions follows the provocation that, far from being consistent across different epochs and contexts, emotions should be understood as contingent historical objects that adapt to the cues and rhythms of disparate imagined communities.<sup>10</sup> As noted previously, the history of fear has begun to attract new attention in these terms, yet this scholarship tends to go back only so far as the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> In short, the strange contingencies of phobia's materialization as an emotion requiring scientific attention, diagnosis, and treatment, have yet to be adequately explored. In dialogue with the work of Eugenie Brinkema, this chapter argues that phobia's early signification is best understood as an emergent emotive *form*, shaped within particular plot dynamics, tonal intensities, and genre affinities transmitted through rabies narratives. More specifically, I argue that one of the major developments in phobia's early signification is that the concept became legible as an *imitative* mechanism, to the extent that phobia became a sort of competitor term for hypochondria. The familiar lag time between the

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<sup>10</sup> See also Jan Plamper's *The History of Emotions* (2015) and Barbara H. Rosenwein's *Generations of Feeling* (2015).

<sup>11</sup> See, for instance, Benjamin Lazier and Jan Plamper's edited collection *Fear across the Disciplines* (2012) and David Trotter's *The Uses of Phobia* (2010).

bite of a dog and the onset of infectious rabies symptoms—then reported to last anywhere from several weeks to several years—was integral to this development. In certain cases of spontaneous hydrophobia, physicians began speculating that it was an antecedent fear of a looming hydrophobia, kindled by too great a familiarity with medical literature, that eventually brought the infamous dread of water into being. It became a widely accepted hypothesis, in other words, that in such cases a manifest hydrophobia was merely a doppelgänger of print representations of the disease feared, which, following a sudden irritation in the throat, fantasy of contamination, or some other non-infectious trigger, had held the mind captive for too long. Taking shape in this dynamic, phobia came to intimate a disturbingly protean feeling: a deadly cathexis underwritten by aversion, which could traverse the realms of cause and symptom imperceptibly. Thus, phobia's phenomenology began to exceed the dread of water for which rabies was known, comprising further an anticipatory, irrational dread of the disease itself, which by virtue of a concealed intensity could produce an imitative pathology by its own means.

Far from settling the matter of spontaneous rabies definitively, phobia's protean status as cause and symptom opened up new riddles in conceptualizing the relationship between pathology, emotion, and the written word. Indeed, medical and lay literature on hydrophobia became a crucial nexus at which late colonial and early U.S. writers themselves debated and tested the historical contingency of emotions. As a feeling capable of generating doppelgänger states, phobia tapped into a debate that has continued to motivate contemporary historians of emotion: are emotions derived from biological instinct and predisposition, or do the dominant emotions circulated among imagined communities—legible across disparate geographies by their correspondence to words—

come into being by and as language? In what measure should we understand emotion as intra-linguistic versus pre-linguistic?<sup>12</sup> To return to the phenomena under consideration, the literature on hydrophobia was clearly succeeding in teaching distant reading publics, uninfected by rabies, how to become hydrophobic—so effectively (it was believed) that the learned emotion could be lethal. Yet, phobia’s causational status in these very cases of spontaneous origin—its ready activation of an imitative sequence, against which physicians earnestly cautioned—amounted to an anticipatory excess, which the logic of performativity could not quite contain. Phobia became an increasingly attractive analytic to late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writers for this reason: because it surfaced murkily at the intersection of organic immediacy and the imitation of language. To trace phobia’s early accumulation of these connotations, this chapter extends methods advocated in the medical humanities to understand medical print culture in terms of its formal conventions and philological attachments.<sup>13</sup> To explore how medical debate went on to foster literary experimentation in the antebellum period, I conclude by turning to a dramatization of spontaneous hydrophobia in a story published by John Neal in *The Atlantic Souvenir* in 1832 titled “The Haunted Man.” For Neal, phobia’s imitative function offered a readymade plotline for pursuing the historical contingency of emotion, in tension with the influence of a non-linguistic affective excess. Playing self-consciously with his fusion of medical inquiry and fiction, Neal emphasizes the infectious as well as healing capacities of print, dramatizing the material influence of the written word not

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<sup>12</sup> For an introduction to this subject, see William Reddy’s *The Navigation of Feeling* (2001), especially the chapter “Emotional Expression as a Type of Speech Act.”

<sup>13</sup> See, for instance, Silva’s *Miraculous Plagues: An Epidemiology of Early New England Narrative* (2011); Pomata’s “The Medical Case Narrative: Distant Reading of an Epistemic Genre” (2014); and Wald’s *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative* (2008).

merely over the content, but likewise over the form and endurance of a patient's interior pathology. Following these analyses, I elaborate phobia's nascent connotations further by turning to writings by George Lippard and Edgar Allan Poe as well.

**“AN ADVENTITIOUS AGENCY”:  
SPONTANEITY IN TRANSATLANTIC MEDICAL PRINT CULTURE**

Prior to understanding the development of phobia's imitative connotations, it is important to piece together a sense of how vast and widely known the literature on spontaneous hydrophobia became in the late 1700s. For physicians in the U.S., before, during, and immediately after the American Revolutionary War, the most authoritative classification of hydrophobia into rabid and spontaneous types came from the work of William Cullen. A revered professor at the Edinburgh School of Medicine, then the epicenter of medical education in the English-speaking world, Cullen trained a number of physicians who went on to work and teach on both sides of the Atlantic. By the year 1800, a total of 117 Americans had obtained their medical degrees at Edinburgh, with many more having been educated at the school in some capacity. This number included the first six professors at the Medical School of the College of Philadelphia (the first medical school in North America, which would become part of the University of Pennsylvania in 1791), including John Morgan, William Shippen, Jr., Benjamin Rush, Adam Kuhn, Philip Syng Physick, and Casper Wistar. Five additional founding members of the College of Philadelphia had received some amount of training in Edinburgh, among them John Jones, George Glentworth, Thomas Parke, Benjamin Duffield, and Samuel Griffitts. Of these eleven professors and founding members, a total of six (Morgan, Glentworth, Shippen, Kuhn, Rush, and Parke) had studied under Cullen

specifically. John M. O'Donnell thus observes, "when we are talking about the American medical imagination...in the last half of the eighteenth century, the ideal images of medical education and organization held by most influential Americans were formed on Scottish soil and at a time when William Cullen's influence was at its height" (235).<sup>14</sup> Conscious of this influence, Cullen would write Rush on October 16, 1784, sending his "respectful and affectionate compliments to all my old pupils at Philadelphia," with the confession,

I shall always hold it my highest honour that the founders of the Medical College of Philadelphia were all of them my Pupils and if it can be known I think it will be the most certain means of transmitting my name to a distant posterity for I believe that this School will one day or other be the greatest in the world.<sup>15</sup>

Cullen's former students reciprocated his sentiments. In a eulogy prepared after Cullen's death in 1790, delivered to the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, Benjamin Rush

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<sup>14</sup> A great number of American physicians chose Edinburgh for medical training because of the School's prestige and association with the Scottish Enlightenment. (Cullen was both a friend of and physician to David Hume and Adam Smith.) While the Edinburgh School offered an ideal education, in this sense, still other connections helped establish a strong relationship between Edinburgh and the American colonies. As medical historian Francis Packard has noted, the benefactor secured by Benjamin Franklin for the Pennsylvania Hospital (the first hospital in the U.S.), a Quaker physician named John Fothergill, was also an alumnus of the Edinburgh School. Perhaps even more crucially, as Stanley Finger has documented, Franklin himself made a concerted effort to facilitate a Philadelphia-to-Edinburgh pipeline for aspiring physicians in the colonies. Finger explains that "within a year after visiting Scotland and making many friends there" in 1759, "Franklin began to recommend training in Edinburgh to Philadelphia's brightest medical students, and to write personal letters of recommendation on their behalf" (138). For Shippen, Morgan, and Rush, Franklin sent such letters of recommendation to Cullen directly.

<sup>15</sup> Cullen to Rush, Edinburgh, 16 October 1784, Rush MSS (Library Company of Philadelphia), XXIV, 56.

depicted his teacher's influence on medicine in the Americas, saying, "although, like the sun, he shone in a distant hemisphere, yet many of the rays of his knowledge have fallen upon this quarter of the globe" (3), with the "blessings of his improvements in the principles and practice of medicine" having reached "every British settlement in the East and West Indies" and "every free State in America" (23). "While Astronomy claims a Newton, and Electricity a Franklin," Rush went on, "Medicine has been equally honoured by having employed the genius of a Cullen" (26).

A major figure of the Scottish Enlightenment, despite being overshadowed by David Hume and Adam Smith in popular memory today, Cullen made his greatest impression on medicine through his popularization of *nosology*, the Enlightenment term meaning "disease classification," as a foundation for the production and dissemination of medical knowledge. Building on the work of earlier nosologists, including English physician Thomas Sydenham, whose *Observationes Medicae* (1676) inaugurated disease classification in the West; French physician François Boissier de Sauvages, whose *Nosologia Methodica* (1763) more completely established nosology as a practice; as well as Carl Linnaeus and Rudolph Vogel, who followed Sauvages in turn,<sup>16</sup> Cullen published his system under the title *Synopsis Nosologiae Methodicae* in 1769. Written in Latin, Cullen's nosology accounted for human diseases across four classes, nineteen orders, and 132 genera. This classificatory scheme quickly became one of the most widely influential, serving as a model for other important works such as French physician Philippe Pinel's momentous *Nosographie Philosophique ou Méthode de l'Analyse*

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<sup>16</sup> Another important predecessor was Herman Boerhaave, whose *Institutiones Medicae* (1708) became one of the most important textbooks for eighteenth-century students of medicine.

*Appliquée à la Médecine* (1798). While the system drawn up by Sauvages would likewise make a significant impact on medicine in the Americas, Cullen, as Robert E. Kendell notes, would become “the most distinguished and influential physician” among late eighteenth-century nosologists. “[H]is reputation as a teacher, and that of the Edinburgh Medical School...endowed his nosology with considerable influence and prestige, particularly in Britain and America” (Kendell 220). While the nature of medical authority and consensus underwent dramatic changes during the period, Cullen’s nosology thus provides a useful starting point for determining how spontaneous hydrophobia acquired consensus as a valuable diagnosis among Anglo-American physicians, in the context of a transatlantic print culture where relevant case histories, theories, and debates became increasingly accessible.

Building on the work of earlier nosologists, Cullen published his system under the title *Synopsis Nosologiae Methodicae* in the 1760s, a system that soon became the most influential among U.S. readers. For his classification of hydrophobia, Cullen accounted for two possible forms: *hydrophobia vulgaris*, communicated from the bite of a rabid animal, and *hydrophobia spontanea*, occurring by means other than “contagium” (357). Recorded in Latin, the entry reads:

Species sunt,

1. Hydrophobia (rabiosa) cum mordendi cupiditate ex morsu animalis rabidi.

Hydrophobia vulgaris, S. sp. 1.

2. Hydrophobia (simplex) sine rabie, vel mordendi cupiditate.

Hydrophobia spontanea, S. sp. 2. (316)

Most instructive here is that just as origins for rabid and spontaneous hydrophobia differ, so too do their symptoms—the rabid form entailing an inclination for biting (*mordendi cupiditate*), the latter occurring without (*sine*) any such desire. The former is distinguished, moreover, by an intrinsic method for perpetual contagion—biting serving as both symptom and cause (*mordendi*, being a future participle conjugated from the infinitive *mordere*, meaning “to bite,” and *morsu* being the singular, ablative case of *morsus*, the noun form meaning “bite”). The latter species materializes spontaneously in that the disease occurs without any such cause or inclination and, therefore, without recourse on either side to self-evident sequence.<sup>17</sup>

The delineation of rabid and spontaneous subspecies of hydrophobia caught on widely in medical literature of the late 1700s and 1800s. At the same time, what physicians meant by “spontaneous” was a complicated matter. In Cullen’s *Synopsis Nosologiae Methodicae*, spontaneous appears synonymous with the term idiopathic, or in Latin *idiopathica*, meaning simply that the disease can seize its victim without being traceable to an evident cause. Cullen thus accounts in the same work for *cholera spontanea*, *dysenteria benigna spontanea*, and other conditions of uncertain derivation. Rather than being devoid of cause, these spontaneous diseases were understood to be diagnosable wherever a disease became manifest, yet narrative explanations of their origin and progression remained obscured. At the same time, the idea that diseases might strike spontaneously shared a certain analogy to other controversial phenomena of the period, such as spontaneous combustion, as well as the doctrine of spontaneous

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<sup>17</sup> Physicians held divergent perspectives on this question of whether spontaneous hydrophobia induced a desire to attack others or not. As demonstrated below, many believed spontaneous hydrophobia did, in fact, produce an infectious saliva, and believed moreover that it drove individuals to pass it on by biting others.



generation, traceable to Aristotle, which held that living organisms could spring from inanimate matter.<sup>18</sup> While spontaneous hydrophobia, as a diagnosis, was a separate matter, since rabies was not presumed to be a life form, it was widely believed that diseases could likewise generate spontaneously. Spontaneity represented in this context a hybrid ground, between narrative murkiness and an immaculate conception of the worst kind.

Attributions of hydrophobia to climate comprised much of the early evidence used to argue that the disease could emerge spontaneously. To understand what spontaneous hydrophobia originally signified to U.S. physicians, it thus becomes necessary to show how a multiplicity of exchanges—transatlantic, transnational, and multilingual—amassed an ever-growing body of knowledge irreducible to the parameters of any single nation state. Indeed, the medical imagination formed by these print exchanges offers one provocative testing ground for what Wai Chee Dimock has called a “through other continents” approach to American studies. “Rather than being a discrete identity,” Dimock writes, “[American literature] is better seen as a crisscrossing set of pathways, open-ended and ever multiplying, weaving in and out of other geographies, other languages and cultures” (3). She specifies further, “These are input channels, kinship networks, routes of transit, and forms of attachment—connective tissues binding America to the rest of the world.” For American physicians increasingly concerned with pinpointing etiologies for disease outbreaks, geographical borders needed to be crossed and transnational dialogues forged. These pursuits in disease travel required, moreover,

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<sup>18</sup> While hotly contested, spontaneous generation continued to find support in the work of eighteenth-century figures like Erasmus Darwin, who advocated a revised theory of “spontaneous vitality” in *The Temple of Nature*. See, for instance, “Remarks on Darwin’s Temple of Nature,” published in *The Literary Magazine, and American Register* in 1804.

that the routes of European colonialism be retraced, to account for the appearance of illness over space and time.

Sudden appearances of the disease in the Americas in the late eighteenth century became some of the most widely cited evidence on both sides of the Atlantic for the idea that hydrophobia could emerge spontaneously. Across North America, South America, and the West Indies, outbreaks began to emerge where no cases had been documented previously. A British physician named Benjamin Moseley, who served at the Royal Military Hospital at Chelsea, observed such instances in a treatise titled *On Hydrophobia, Its Prevention and Cure*. Maintaining that hydrophobia did not exist in the Caribbean before 1783, Moseley states that it appeared first that year on the island of Hispaniola and in 1784 was discovered in Jamaica. Moseley portrays this development as a consequence of climate, at the root of a spontaneous etiology. “The common notion,” he writes, “that this disease among Dogs can only proceed from the poison of an external bite...has excluded the idea of spontaneous madness, arising from some peculiar influence in the air. But this influence of the air generated the Canine Madness in the year 1783, in the West Indies” (26). Enumerating multiple cases in which dogs, the enslaved, slaveholders and livestock in and around Kingston succumbed to the disease, Moseley insists that while rabid attacks soon played a part in how rapidly the epidemic spread, it began among dogs who “had no communication with others.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> It is important to note that while a majority of physicians of the period entertained the possibility of spontaneous hydrophobia, some staunchly opposed the idea. The most frequently referenced of these detractors was James Bardsley, a graduate of Edinburgh who held a post at the Manchester Infirmary. Taking the outbreaks in Jamaica and St. Domingo as examples, Bardsley contends that hydrophobia could not logically be attributed to the climate of the islands for one simple reason: “Simple heat will not create the disease, as [hydrophobia] is not more common in tropical regions” than in Europe or

The most commonly observed example in support of spontaneous origin in the Americas was an epidemic that erupted in Peru in 1803, in which animals began falling prey to hydrophobia in droves without there being any self-explanatory way for the disease to have arrived. The difficulty of explaining its arrival had to do with Peru's renowned geographical isolation, by the Pacific to the west and the Andes to the east. Details first spread to physicians in Europe and North America in the form of a treatise written by Peruvian physician José Hipólito Unanue titled *Observaciones sobre el Clima de Lima*, published in Lima in 1806 and in Madrid in 1815. In the *Observaciones*, Unanue records how the "enfermedad" known as "hidrofobia" first appeared on the northern coast of Peru as "una rabia espontánea nacida del aumento del calor, que hubo en los años de 803 y 804," or a spontaneous rabies born from heightened temperatures, from 1803 to 1804 (67). Many physicians translated and retold the ensuing catastrophe in turn. U.S. Navy Surgeon Richard K. Hoffman wrote to acquaintances of how the disease, prompted by "excessive heat," soon "became general among quadrupeds, attacking them indiscriminately" (Qtd. in Pascalis 139). Hoffman characterizes the scene that followed in gruesome detail:

[D]ogs walked with their tails between their legs, discharged much saliva, concealed themselves from men, howled loudly, and soon fell dead...[;] cats ran with their hair erect...[;] horses and asses were enraged against each other...threw themselves and wallowed on the earth...[;] cattle evinced the same rage, by leaping furiously and engaging in hostile strife,

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elsewhere (499). While Bardsley won some converts to this line of reasoning, others held fast to the idea of sudden onset.

in which they often broke their horns, and soon expired in the act of bellowing. (139)

Only after this initial eruption was the disease “subsequently propagated by specific contagions.” By 1807, the disease had reached the cities of Arequipa and Lima. But even as a number of people thus contracted the disease from having been bitten, still other persons appeared to acquire the condition autonomously, in the manner of the species where it first became manifest.<sup>20</sup> The conclusion among physicians, as conveyed in the writings of Felix Pascalis, a physician from St. Domingo who fled to the U.S. following the Haitian Revolution, was that the outbreak in Peru proved firstly that “certain morbid causes self-engender the canine rabies” and secondly that “the same adventitious agency has produced hydrophobia and rabid diseases in human beings” (140). Even Charles Darwin would observe the case in his *Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited during the Voyage of the H.M.S. Beagle Round the World* (1846), noting “it is said,” regarding the hydrophobia outbreak in Arequipa in 1807, that “some men there, who had not been bitten, were affected” (113). While Darwin has since been given much credit for overturning the logic of spontaneous generation through his theory of evolution, he muses in the journal, “In so strange a disease, some information might possibly be gained by considering the circumstances under which it originates in distant climates” where it seems “improbable that a dog already bitten should have been brought to these distant countries” (114).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Unanue accounts for this phenomenon, explaining, “en los lugares donde el calor fué muy fuerte cayeron varios hombres enfermos con todo el aparato de la hidrofobia sin haber sido mordidos” (68).

<sup>21</sup> For another account of this outbreak, see Archibald Smith’s *Peru as It Is: A Residence in Lima and Other Parts of the Peruvian Republic, Comprising an Account of the Social*

While climatological theories helped establish faith in spontaneous origin on a transatlantic scale, the literature on rabies soon opened onto a more nuanced interrogation of the disease's potential psychological origins. In some cases, neighboring forms of mental illness such as mania and melancholia were presumed responsible. In still other cases, victims were observed suffering from cases of hydrophobia after being bitten by a dog, only to discover subsequently that the dog had never been rabid. Extending Cullen's classification, a member of the Royal College of Physicians in London named Robert Hamilton thus concludes his book-length study *Remarks on Hydrophobia*, published in 1798, by dividing spontaneous hydrophobia itself into subspecies: one proceeding "where strong imagination, or deep impressions of the mind from various other causes induce a train of symptoms apparently similar, and scarcely to be distinguished from the malady excited by rabid infection"; the other being preceded by the bite of an animal, yet "where terror only seemed to excite the succeeding disease" (249). Hamilton continues by enumerating examples of each form. Cases illustrating the first were often found to result from mental conditions like "hysteria, melancholy, mania, &c.," in which resemblance to the disease was so strong ("convulsions on the touch of water" included) that cases could even "prove fatal." An example taken from Dr. Raymond based in Marseilles tells of a twelve-year-old boy who developed hydrophobia with no record of having been bitten.

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*and Physical Features of That Country, Vol. II* (1839). Smith recalls that hydrophobia "arose spontaneously from the increased atmospherical temperature of the years 1803 and 1804" (248). Smith goes on to explain how a debate transpired over "whether or not the malady was a legitimate hydrophobia," to the extent that "very learned papers *pro* and *con* were written by the Doctors Rosas and Salvani," to determine what part people's imaginations had played in the unfurling epidemic (250). As late as 1872, by which time most physicians had abandoned theories of spontaneous hydrophobia, the British veterinarian George Fleming would cite the Peruvian epidemic as evidence of its existence, however rare (87). Fleming goes on to cite apparently spontaneous outbreaks in Algeria as well, occurring intermittently during the 1830s, '40s, '50s, and '60s.

“In the height of the paroxysm,” Hamilton explains, “he was unruly, frantic, endeavored to bite, and had a dread of water.” Within two days, the boy perished (259).<sup>22</sup> Cases of the latter tell of persons who developed symptoms after having sustained a bite, often in a matter of days, only to recover soon after, thus indicating that no actual infection had taken place. Among these, one of the most famous was a case reported by an Italian physician named Dr. Barbantini, which made it to the pages of the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* in 1828, telling of a dog who bit his owner and afterward absconded, presumably to die. “The disease made its appearance,” the journal reports, “and for four days the patient could neither swallow fluids nor liquids” (333). When nine days later the dog returned unexpectedly to “the bedchamber of its master, whom he caressed as usual,” the dread of water quickly “disappeared.” In these latter cases, it became apparent that a phenomenon of imitation had taken effect, by which individuals dreading a hydrophobic death, perceived to be inevitable, began impulsively to perform a corresponding train of symptoms.

**SPONTANEITY AND IMITATION;  
OR, BENJAMIN RUSH VS. NOSOLOGY**

Across the latter half of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, a number of interrelated explanations—climatological, psychological, and otherwise—thus pointed to the existence, and special threat, of a spontaneous form. As a multitude of idiopathic cases gradually appeared consistent across these categories, an array of

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<sup>22</sup> Such cases accumulated rapidly on both sides of the Atlantic. An article published in *The American Museum, or, Universal Magazine* thus explains to readers in August 1790, “We have numerous and well attested instances on record, of [hydrophobia] being produced in persons, who have not been bitten by a mad animal; but in whom it was occasioned by excessive fatigue and labour; violent and depressing passions, chagrin, grief, anger, &c.—causes, which are evidently and powerfully debilitating” (68).

alternative etiologies became established throughout the Atlantic world, a handful of which I have elaborated upon here. These cases help explain why the logic of spontaneity gathered momentum. Nevertheless, they do not provide a full picture of a medical epistemology that made these explanations admissible. Two concepts integral to the diagnosis require further scrutiny: spontaneity and imitation. Beyond its connection to theories of spontaneous etiology, spontaneity, as a temporality characterizing certain experiences of disease, possessed an important affinity with understandings of disease classification, writ large, at the close of the eighteenth century. So too was the logic of imitation fostered by neighboring theories of disease origin, which made it possible to conceptualize an array of illnesses as essentially performative.

As noted above, the perception of infectious and spontaneous hydrophobias as largely continuous at the level of disease manifestation, despite their distinct etiologies, stemmed in large part from a belief in the centrality of the nervous system to the production of disease. From this bird's-eye view, while matters of causation certainly provided a conceptual riddle in terms of prevention, it nevertheless became possible to imagine the onset of the disease as somewhat irrelevant to a diversity of causes. In cases of infectious hydrophobia, as James Vaughan put it succinctly in his *Cases and Observations on the Hydrophobia* in 1778, it was understood that “the poison of the dog, or other mad animal, acts upon the nerves, by impairing and disturbing their influence; and this at length increases to so great a degree, as to speedily end in a total extinction of the vital principle” (52). By this logic, the rabid poison secreted in a dog's saliva was perceived to be merely a catalyst to a subsequent fundamental process, which, in theory, some other catalyst could also trigger. In his 1753 *Essay on the Hydrophobia*,

Christopher Nugent (physician and father-in-law to Edmund Burke) well articulates the dilemma physicians thus faced with the following queries: (1) “If the *natural* and vital Action of the Nerves, and nervous Solids, in the human Body, solely consists in a *regular* Succession of alternate Contractions and Dilatations; and that the Use of this natural regular Action is, to propel, prepare, and distribute the Fluids, for the Secretions, and other necessary Purposes... must not the *preternatural* Action, or rather Passion, of these same Nerves and Solids, consist in *irregular* Emotions?” Following this logic, Nugent continues: (2) “Whatever the *immediate* cause of the natural and salutary Oscillations of the Solids may be; is not that of their disorderly spasmodic Emotions, on all hands, allowed to be, either some *material Stimulus*; or some *affecting Thought*?” (45-6; 47). While, interestingly enough, Nugent bring this relationship to the fore not to address the question of spontaneous hydrophobia, but rather to develop a perspective on the possibility of hydrophobia’s cure, Nugent’s formulations help us arrive at an understanding of why rabid saliva had begun to be conceptualized by a number of physicians as just one cause among many. It remained important to distinguish these divergent pathways of causation to a point; yet, it remained equally important that one imagine a more fundamental field of interior stimuli, by which “irregular emotions” and “affecting thoughts” threatened to disrupt the normal operations of the nervous system from within. In *Zoonomia; Or, the Laws of Organic Life* (1794), comparable concerns would lead Erasmus Darwin to describe rabid infection itself as a condition of “imitation.” Observing that the rabid poison communicated by a rabid dog “does not appear to enter the circulation,” Darwin proposes that somehow the saliva secreted by the bite of a mad dog, into the wound of its victim, triggers the “salivary glands” of the latter



into an “irritative sympathy,” so that new poisons are produced not by straightforward transmission, but instead by a process of remote imitation.

Beyond these theories pertaining to the nervous system, still other factors played an important role. As this chapter is largely about taxonomy and its afterlives, we should observe that the function of language was just as important to the rise of spontaneous hydrophobia as a kind of doppelgänger diagnosis. Michel Foucault’s contributions to the history of medicine offer a particularly useful lens for discerning spontaneity’s *adjectival* role in disease classification. In *The Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault describes Enlightenment-era nosology as representing a two-dimensional spatiality where “families, genera, and species” came to serve as self-sustaining coordinates, irrespective of the physical bodies and narratives to which they might be applied. With an illustrative simile, Foucault explains,

Just as the genealogical tree, at a lower level than the comparison that it involves and all its imaginary themes, presupposes a space in which kinship is formalizable, the nosological picture involves a figure of the diseases that is neither the chain of causes and effects nor the chronological series of events nor its visible trajectory in the human body.

(4-5)

In its purest sense, the nosological depiction of disease thus rested on what Foucault elsewhere describes as an imagined “essence,” which case histories could corroborate, yet were not intended to challenge. Foucault is careful to clarify that this is not the same as saying that physicians of the period considered causation irrelevant. Citing Cullen specifically, Foucault notes that the physician’s classificatory scheme was largely

founded on “the attribution of related causes” pertaining to the nerves (5). Even here, however, Foucault argues that causation remained tangential to a purity of identity. The form of medical knowledge nosology delineated consisted in “a sort of fundamental area in which perspectives are levelled off, and in which shifts of level are aligned”—a space where “an effect has the same status as its cause, the antecedent coincides with what follows it” (6). “In this homogeneous space,” Foucault continues, “series are broken and time abolished.” Returning to the logic of a spontaneous etiology, we might conclude that spontaneity became, in this sense, more the rule than the exception. For all practical purposes, eighteenth-century nosology had developed a tradition of treating the knowledge of diseases as a knowledge of *a priori* forms. Hydrophobia could follow the bite of rabid dog, but it could also materialize from within: what mattered was an identity of bodily manifestation with *textual description*. Foucault pictures these textual descriptions, as they became organized into authoritative taxonomies, as comprising a “flat surface of perpetual simultaneity” (6).

As other scholars have noted, Foucault’s writings on disease, madness, and the rise of a new medical authority in Europe do not always hold up when studied against archival particularities. Even so, as Jan Goldstein has observed, Foucault has a way of getting things right, even when wrong. Foucault’s portrayal of eighteenth-century nosology as a “flat surface of perpetual simultaneity” essentially unconcerned with actual bodies may be overly simplistic, then, yet we find in turning to the literature on hydrophobia that certain physicians of the period began taking issue with nosology on exactly these grounds. The increased authority of nosology’s two-dimensional system over medicine had indeed begun to infuse the nomenclature it housed with a conspicuous

power. The capacity to recognize a classification in practice, and thus to subsume that case back within a nosological scheme, had become an inextricable responsibility of medical care. This status of nosological authority produced a rather conspicuous confusion surrounding hydrophobia, in particular, since the disease had been named for a singular symptom—namely, the fear of water—which most of the time accompanied rabid infection, but sometimes did not. Dissatisfied with this imprecision, some began acknowledging the problem of hydrophobia’s nominal designation outright. One of the most significant critiques among U.S. physicians came from the pen of Benjamin Rush. In the fourth volume of his *Medical Inquiries and Observations*, published in 1798, Rush begins by conceding that the “dread of water” from which hydrophobia derives its name is indeed a common manifestation of the disease—a manifestation tending to pass through five stages, including (1) that water cannot be imbibed, (2) that it cannot be touched, (3) that its sound cannot be tolerated, (4) that its sight becomes unbearable, and (5) that “even the naming of it cannot be borne without exciting convulsions” (305).<sup>23</sup> However, he clarifies that the fear is not generalizable to all cases and that “hydrophobia” is, therefore, something of a misnomer, speaking to a tendency in nosology to allow a primary symptom of a disease to stand in as its name. “The imperfection of the present nomenclature of medicine,” Rush explains, “has become the subject of general complaint....The terms hydrophobia and canine madness, convey ideas of the symptoms of the disease only, and of such of them too as are by no means universal” (324-5). Rush

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<sup>23</sup> This last symptom was often reported. See, for instance, the 1797 case of a six-year old attacked and bitten in the face by a dog belonging to his uncle. Not long after he began to succumb to the “canine madness,” it is reported that “even the mentioning of drink would produce similar agitations,” to those brought on by water itself, and thus “bring on a return of the fits” (Alden 52).

goes on in the essay to pursue a red herring. He proposes as an alternative that the disease in question is a kind of fever analogous to tetanus; that the “mortality of the disease from the bite of a rabid animal” has “increased” because it has been wrongly named (and therefore wrongly treated); and that the disease should be referred to instead as “the hydrophobic state of fever.” While this idea, that hydrophobia is a form of fever, would gain relatively few converts and eventually be discredited, the critique of nosology on which Rush premised his intervention went on to gather steam, introducing important consequences for the way spontaneous hydrophobia was interpreted afterward.

Far beyond his theories on hydrophobia, Rush became known for having an axe to grind when it came to nosology’s tyranny. An anonymous manuscript poem from 1810, now residing in the Rush papers at the Library Company of Philadelphia, takes this resistance on Rush’s part for its muse. Likely written by one of Rush’s students or colleagues, the poem, titled “Lines on the Death of Nosology,” begins with a proclamation: “Beneath this chair with thousand errors dead/Nosology now rests her lifeless head!/Surround her tomb, ye pedant Quacks and mourn,/Your whole resource from medicine is torn.” Nosology’s greatest sin, the speaker asserts, is its faith in “Hard names,” which gather “fame for fools,” and in so doing obscure the real nature of illnesses underneath. Reaching its climax, the poem praises Rush for having vanquished the villain nosology at last, and thus having saved medicine from its dubious clutches. “But med’cine naked through the world shall rove,” the speaker promises. “The blind man see her, and the sick man love:/Great Rush’s name engrav’d upon her heart.” A condemnation of eighteenth-century systems echoed in Rush’s lecture manuscripts, the poem captures how the doctor eventually became known for distinguishing his practice

and thought from his training in Edinburgh. As Sari Altschuler has demonstrated, Rush conceived of human bodies not as “automatons” but as “dynamic living systems,” or “what he elsewhere would call ‘tremendous oscillatory mass[es] of matter’” (209). Likewise, Rush came to conceive of disease in a unified sense—more complex in its capacity for both interrelation and diversity than the discrete identities of nosology would imply.

This distrust of classificatory language carried particular repercussions for definitions of hydrophobia: it allowed for a lexical disarticulation between *names*, thus prompting phobia’s signification to take new shape. Eugenie Brinkema has observed that affect theory generally emphasizes affect as extra-formal, as describing a pre-linguistic intensity, inhering in that which “cannot be written” (xii). The consequence has been a conspicuous negligence as to how the para-linguistic elements of emotion interact with and become shaped by cultural and textual forces. As Brinkema writes, “Critical positions that align affect” too starkly with a resistance to “structure, form, textuality, signification, legibility” betray a conspicuous investment in discovering a “transcendental signified,” a “fantasy of something that predates the linguistic turn and that evades the slow, hard tussle of reading texts closely” (xiv). In the literature on spontaneous rabies, we find that a rift between names, once characterized by classificatory equivalence, began to open up divergent pathways for encountering phobia as a state extricable from the disease associated with canine contagion.

Concerning his 1798 writings on spontaneous hydrophobia specifically, it is worth noting that Rush’s perspective occupied some middle ground between Cullen’s nosology and something else. Ultimately, Rush admits that infectious and spontaneous

hydrophobia can seize individuals as comparable states of disease (i.e. fever), even as he puts pressure on a facile classificatory method in which that continuity was presumed without question. Acknowledging the apparent facticity of spontaneous hydrophobia, Rush aims for an exhaustive account of its potential causes, including everything from cold night air, exposure to intense heat, and inflammation of the stomach, to the mundane inconvenience of “fall[ing] down.” As with many of the other diseases the physician treated, Rush prescribes generous bloodletting as a treatment in all variations. Regarding instances of spontaneous hydrophobia, specifically, Rush observes two cases, one treated by a Dr. Tilton of Delaware, the other by a Dr. Innes of an unspecified region, where bloodletting was practiced—with a total of 116 ounces being depleted in the latter case. Through this method of treatment, both cases were allegedly cured (319).<sup>24</sup>

Yet even as Rush maintained a certain loyalty to this scheme, by which infectious and spontaneous hydrophobia could be treated as continuous, he made an important caveat. Just as rabid infection might progress without hydrophobia (as a symptom), Rush insisted that hydrophobic symptoms might emerge from other causes. For Rush, the greatest threat lay in the potency of human thought processes and emotion to produce an incapacitating dread of water independently. Such factors made it necessary for physicians to be able to interpret the psychological threads of case histories, as they might depart from familiar narratives of disease progression. While exploring a range of affective disturbances, Rush emphasizes the unmistakable role played by fear. “Where

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<sup>24</sup> For a contemporary refutation of bloodletting in the treatment of hydrophobia, see Philadelphia physician James Mease’s “Observations on the Arguments of Professor Rush, in Favour of the Inflammatory Nature of the Disease Produced by the Mad Dog.” Philadelphia: Whitehall, 1801.

the interval between the time of being bitten, and the appearance of a dread of water exceeds five or six months,” Rush explains,

it is probable it may be occasioned by a disease derived from another cause....The recollection of the poisonous wound he has received, and its usual consequences, is seldom absent from his mind for months or years....His fears are then let loose upon his system, and produce in a short time a dread of water which appears to be wholly unconnected with the bite of a rabid animal. Similar instances of the effects of fear upon the human body are to be met with in books of medicine. The pains produced by fear acting upon the imagination in supposed venereal infections, are as real and severe as they are in the worst state of that disease. (310-11)

In this passage, Rush re-categorizes hydrophobia—now disentangled from the infectious disease associated with that symptom—as a state of fear, which might only be capitalizing on an antecedent fear that has long progressed unhindered, this being a fear of an impending confirmation of infection. It is important to note that Rush was hardly the first to tackle this etiological ruse. As early as 1788, British surgeon Jessé Foot observed that in certain cases perceived to be instances of rabid hydrophobia, from Bath to Barbados, symptoms had been merely psychological: “The mind of a person, who has been bitten by a dog, supposed to be mad, being constantly under the impression of so dreadful an attack, is open, and for a long time liable to the tyranny and sport of imaginary assaults” (27). The general phenomenon of imitating a known symptomatology out of fear had been hypothesized in respect to other disease outbreaks

as well, one of the best known being yellow fever.<sup>25</sup> Yet Rush's account stands out for being uniquely articulate about the connection between this performative phobia and fear, specifically. In effect, Rush redefines phobia as a state of mimicry, representing, at once, the continuation of an earlier state of fear, as well as a new imitation of the object with which that inaugural fear had been concerned. If instances of this spontaneous hydrophobia have been mistakenly equated with the disease transmitted by rabid dogs, Rush suggests this is precisely because phobia possesses a chameleon-like capacity to imitate a state as "real and severe" as the disease with which it is preoccupied. Here Rush's critique of medical nomenclature admits a new reading: an identity of disease description and physiological manifestation might be entirely misleading when it comes to landing on a proper treatment. Symptoms may be deadly and performative at the same time: to treat them successfully, physicians must be prepared to discern the suffering subject's condition holistically, including attention to that subject's psychological history.

**THE WORD MADE FLESH:  
PHOBIA'S SPECTRAL TEXTUALITY IN JOHN NEAL'S "THE HAUNTED MAN"**

These developments in a phobic imagination facilitated through narratives of hydrophobia reached far and wide. An article titled "Mad Dogs" published in the *Maine Farmer* in 1849 shows how physicians practicing in more remote regions of the U.S. came to engage with, and found avenues for contributing to, debates over the nature of the disease as well. Published in the form of a letter written by a Dr. John S. Lynde of

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<sup>25</sup> For an essay comparing the influence of fear on epidemics of hydrophobia and yellow fever, see Edward Miller's "Remarks on the Importance of the Stomach as a Centre of Association" (1802). For a more capacious meditation on fear's power to generate pathology, see William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine* (1809, 1813). In terms of relevant scholarship, see also Marie-Hélène Huet's *The Culture of Disaster* (2012).



Norridgewock, Maine, the article begins with the categorical conclusion that “There is no such disease as hydrophobia, rationally speaking, either in dogs or man” (2). The doctor proceeds to ascribe the disease, in nearly all of its alleged appearances, to fear:

Let the person be under no influence of fear, and a thousand, and even ten thousand to one, he will not be poisoned. *Fear*, in most cases, is the great cause of the invasion. The person bitten must not live under the influence of fear; for fear brings on its whole train of symptoms. It is therefore, evident that the disease is generally imaginary. (2)

Following these assertions, Lynde arrives at his special intervention. He explains that the disease, being “a popular *scarecrow* to frighten nervous and impressible people,” must actually be a remnant or new manifestation of “the *lycanthropy* of remote ages” (2). He reiterates: “Lycanthropy is the legitimate mother of human hydrophobia.” Just as “it was supposed” some “five centuries before the christian era” that “men possessed the power of converting themselves into *wolves*,” hydrophobia has “sprung up in a short period from a more enlightened superstition.” In this “enlightened” form, we find a fear of descending to a state of rabidity producing a performative fantasy of that very state. It is worth emphasizing that almost no one would have agreed with Lynde’s opinion that all instances of hydrophobia were reducible to a performative fear. Nevertheless, the article exemplifies well how the threat of spontaneous hydrophobia infused nineteenth-century conceptions of pathological fear with a highly particularized set of coordinates. In short, the primary analogy for a phobic imagination in the U.S. became a victim in the throes of an imaginative hydrophobia. Dr. Lynde demonstrates further how the lens of spontaneous hydrophobia offered a means of revisiting and re-interpreting old literary and

mythological traditions. Lynde uses the subspecies to adorn the werewolf of yore with a compelling psychological backstory.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, this matter of reading emotion for its textuality and form—as something filled out by plot, motif, and narrative expectation—needs further elaboration. What makes phobia especially compelling as a subject of the history of emotions is that, as a site of mystery, contestation, and (eventually) wordplay, phobia elicited new meditations on the material contingencies of emotive experience and expression. One of the most remarkable pieces of fiction to dramatize spontaneous hydrophobia for such purposes is a short story by John Neal titled “The Haunted Man,” published in the *Atlantic Souvenir* in 1832. In offering a reading of “The Haunted Man,” I want to argue that Neal not only echoes Rush’s interest in the power of phobia to imitate disease, but also experiments with something like a history-of-emotions methodology, to track the emergence of a phobic sensibility among contemporary readerships. “The Haunted Man” begins by depicting a church service in the southern part of England. During communion, an alarming episode transpires. The narrator hears behind him “a sort of smothered cry” accompanied by “a loud gasping for breath,” then turns just in time “to see one of the golden cups flung on the pavement” with “red wine running over the marble floor.” The stranger who has dashed the cup to the ground stands up “face to face, with the frightened preacher” before him, “the cup lying at his feet as if crushed and trampled on.” Chaos

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<sup>26</sup> It is worth noting that the opposite theory—precisely that hydrophobia is responsible for various traditions in monster lore—has more recently been ventured. In *The Werewolf Delusion* (1979), Ian Woodward suggests possible connections between rabies and the origin of werewolf legends. Even more popular has been the theory, put forth by Spanish neurologist Juan Gómez-Alonso in 1998, that 18<sup>th</sup> century legends of vampires have their definitive origin in popular accounts of hydrophobia. Gómez-Alonso proposes that individuals who might have been mistaken for vampires were, in fact, “people or animals with unrecognized furious rabies” (858).

ensues: “the windows and doors suddenly darkened with a mass of human creatures trying to escape; and the communicants clinging to each other and recoiling in breathless terror.” When the commotion subsides, readers find the stranger lying prostrate on the floor, the church “deserted,” and the narrator in a stupor, clueless as to what has just happened. That Neal begins with this scene of communion is hardly coincidental: what follows is perhaps best described as a gothic-comic tale driven by an enigmatic affective transubstantiation.

Fifteen months following the encounter, the narrator stumbles onto the stranger once again, this time while “loitering through the grounds at Versailles,” and they become friends. After enjoying “an intimacy of a whole month,” the narrator observes that his companion, who we learn goes by the alias “Mr. Smith,” becomes “suddenly pale—as pale as death” while passing a fountain. Anxious to recover a look of calm, Smith leads the narrator into a café and inquires whether the narrator has “ever observed anything strange in his behaviour.” When the narrator confesses that “every thing he did was strange,” his companion exclaims suddenly, “I am *a haunted man!*” and collapses into a fit of “uncontrollable laughter” (236). At last Smith collects himself and tells the narrator the history of his suffering. “About fourteen years ago,” he recalls, “I was bitten by a dog....A favourite animal of my mother’s, a water spaniel not bigger than a large cat” (238). Another fit of laughter here erupts, but Smith collects himself and proceeds: “I am a haunted man—haunted by strange human faces bowing to me, and firmly persuaded that one day or other I shall die of hydrophobia.” The narrator asks whether the dog who bit him was mad. Smith answers, “Ah, I had forgotten the best part of the whole story...ha ha ha—we never knew; she ate and drank well to the last: I was drinking at the

time she bit me—ha ha ha! But she sickened and died soon after, and we had reason to believe that a very decided case of hydrophobia occurred, among the hounds of a neighbor.” As the story concludes, the narrator races through a series of flashbacks, each an instance when Smith acted strangely in the presence of water. The episodes during communion and at Versailles, unfortunate settings for one stricken with a dread of liquids, begin to make sense.

At this juncture, Neal arrives at the maddening crisis of the story: with Smith’s symptoms in such abundance, it seems his suspicions are well-grounded. “What could I say?” the narrator asks his reader (240). Then, as he inquires further into his friend’s condition, the narrator lands on a detail of particular import. When he suggests Smith read books on the topic, to improve his perception of his symptoms, Smith does not take kindly to the idea:

‘The devil take your books,’ said he: ‘it was they and your infernal newspapers that first set me thinking of this frightful possibility. I read volumes and volumes in all the languages of Europe, and they left me more than half dead from their tenor. I met with cases well authenticated, beautifully authenticated, of symptoms appearing eighteen, twenty, and even thirty years after the bite, followed by death, sir, death. (240)

With this rant, Smith seems at first to have the narrator stumped. The bite of a dog, potentially rabid, had successfully engendered, with the aid of the print media amassed to offer corresponding wisdom, a life consumed in uncertain anticipation. The riddle—does he have it, or doesn’t he?—seems unsolvable. Yet Smith’s dread of medical literature, circulated transatlantically and multilinguistically, introduces a new clue. Smith invokes

the “tenor” of this literature as an infectious agent on its own terms: an imperative to make and circulate medical knowledge, which has had the rather adverse effect of leaving him “half dead.” Whatever intelligence Smith has obtained from medical texts, it has imported into his physiology a peculiar excess—not just a wealth of information, but an *interior formation*—shaping and gradually intensifying a phenomenology of disease, in advance of its imagined confirmation.

Ultimately, this clue and the narrator’s own familiarity with the medical literature on spontaneous hydrophobia combine to offer Smith a miraculous deliverance. “I trembled from head to foot,” the narrator recalls, “wondering, at the same time, why it had not struck me before; how could I be so stupid!” (242). The narrator explains to Smith that the symptoms with which he has become preoccupied “are not by any means confined to hydrophobia...the dread of water is not a conclusive symptom, any more than aerophobia, a dread of air, or pantiphobia, a dread of every thing” (244). He goes on: “Fear of itself, the mere apprehension of such a death, is now generally known to be capable of producing all the symptoms that you are afflicted with.” In short, Smith has developed nothing more than a case of spontaneous hydrophobia, analogous to any other irrational fear. The narrator begins listing examples: “John Hunter mentions a case, and Barbantini another.” Thrilled at hearing of these established cases, Smith decides this must indeed be the nature of his malady, and his anxieties are alleviated. The drama of the story thus rises and falls with the revelation of this triangulated relationship: two strangers who find a common comfort only after their dialogue has been mediated by a vast, already spectral medical print culture. This accumulation of medical knowledge turns out to be both the original offender, guilty for having first inflicted its special curse,

as well as Smith's salvation. When, happily, the two depart—Smith allegedly freed of the disease for good—we are left not only with an intimate fraternity unburdened, but also faith in a glut of knowledge production, joyously restored.

Yet the phrase “Fear of itself,” by virtue of the ambiguity of that pronoun—the indeterminacy of its referent—also highlights the strange hybridity of the feeling under scrutiny. On the one hand, “itself” gestures back to the hydrophobia disclosed by Smith; however, “Fear of itself” also intimates a fear of fear itself, thus gesturing further to phobia's smooth circularity and proclivity for inciting doppelgänger states. The lasting impression seems to be that a clandestine marriage, between an infectious genre of knowledge production and an anticipatory fear equipped for it, has effectively activated in Smith a new emotive register. While the narrator takes it for granted that fear “is now generally known” to be an emotion capable of mimicking lethal symptoms, the simplicity of the solution obscures a reciprocity intrinsic to Neal's plot, by which it is precisely the “devil[ish]” books in which this “now” standardized knowledge appears that first communicated to Smith a recognizable phobic expression.<sup>27</sup> In short, phobia's imitative function cannot be extricated from the case studies that first set the terms for Smith's dread to become manifest as such. To adapt Mel Chen's approach to linguistics in *Animacies* (2012), such literature turns out to have animated phobia as a lexical nexus on two fronts: by organizing a phenomenology of disease progression into a recognizable

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<sup>27</sup> It is not entirely clear why Neal decided to publish this story in *The Atlantic Souvenir*, an annual gift book. I speculate that, in part, it suits Neal's sense of humor that there are nested “gifts” and “souvenirs” that come via reading in the story. Hydrophobia serves as Smith's unwanted readerly souvenir (genuinely Atlantic, *a la* the circulating case studies invoked). At the same time, so is his cure gifted in print. As *souvenir* is also French for memory, the venue title dovetails nicely with Neal's interest in the dangers of obsessive recollection as well.

affective category, and by outfitting that category with a lethal “tenor” and power over conceptions of the biological. While it may at first be tempting to see in “The Haunted Man” and the medical print culture it invokes a kind of triumph of psychological investigation, by which a transhistorical feeling became recognized and multiplied as a variable pathology necessitating analysis, this type of distant reading neglects the strange contingencies of phobia’s production as a legible state of mind.

Indeed, as “The Haunted Man” concludes, these contingencies stick as if to reassert that the riddle they pose, far and above the benefits of fraternity, is the centripetal force of the story. The narrator concludes by noting that one year following their shared epiphany, he received a letter from Smith who wrote to confirm that he was now “the happiest fellow on the face of the earth, perfectly cured of everything in the world,” but for one thing: “the dread of water” itself, as “he had never been able, and was afraid he never should be able, to overcome his repugnance to that liquid” (246). The resilience of his dread sets Neal up for one last joke: stricken with a persistent hydrophobia, Smith confesses he has reliably made his substitute “the very best of old port wine, and plenty of it.” Yet the idea of a hydrophobic excess, a haunting that outlasts its disillusionment, also keeps Neal’s gothic enigma alive, foreclosing resolution. Smith’s dread, a disposition doubled and transmitted to him via print, cannot after all be so spontaneously reversed. Rather Smith discovers that his physiology has permanently absorbed the case studies he had earlier encountered. Reckoning with this perverse implantation, Smith acknowledges he has no choice but to keep performing, however reluctantly, phobia’s intractable mimicry.

**“[M]Y FORM TORN BY CONVULSIONS”:  
COMPETING PLOTLINES IN GEORGE LIPPARD’S *LEGENDS OF THE AMERICAN  
REVOLUTION***

The possibility of absorbing pathology by proxy became an important theme in gothic literature of the nineteenth century. In this sense, it is important to acknowledge that the rise of a phobic imagination belongs to a more capacious tradition in American fiction where dark interiorities, diverse in scope, create gothic moods and landscapes by indulging in the perspectival unreliability of compromised subjects. Emily Dickinson famously distills the appeal of the conceit when she writes: “One need not be a Chamber—to be Haunted—/One need not be a House—/The Brain has Corridors—surpassing/Material Place—.” The enticing terror of Dickinson’s poem is that it unravels the fantasy one can encounter the gothic, while still enjoying the safe remove of one’s interpretive faculties. The brain appears as a dilapidated estate, where narrow “corridors,” paralleled in the syntactic lapses of Dickinson’s dashes, conceal villains from within. By the concluding stanza, these interior hauntings turn out to enjoy an alarming sovereignty over their host: “The Body—borrows a Revolver—/He bolts the Door—/O’erlooking a superior spectre—/Or More—.” Sensing imminent peril, Dickinson’s Body takes caution to arm itself and bar entrance to its house, yet, within these nested interiors of home and self, the Body has only made its vulnerability to a rogue unconscious all the more airtight. In the decades preceding Dickinson’s poem, interest in depicting gothic psychologies took myriad forms. In accounting for how early Americans began to recognize themselves as susceptible to phobia’s imitative tendencies, it thus remains to be shown how this newly cohering phobic imagination began to denote a more precise sensibility among early republic and antebellum readerships.



The idea that fear could generate disease independently of other etiologies was widespread in the early republic and antebellum period. This discourse intersected extensively with the literature on yellow fever, venereal disease, and other maladies. All such discussions of affective etiology dovetailed, moreover, with a major area of medical inquiry concerned with a disease known as *hypochondriasis*. Taking these intersecting discourses into account, the question thus surfaces: why should we consider the literature on spontaneous hydrophobia as somehow unique from these neighboring debates? One of the easiest answers, which also helps to explain why physicians considered it important to retain a nominal distinction between infectious and spontaneous types, is that in an era of medicine preceding the advents of epidemiology and microbiology, the bite of a mad dog represented perhaps *the* most self-evident condition of contagion known to physicians. The idea that rabies could happen spontaneously thus makes the literature on hydrophobia a remarkable site for testing early American conceptions of disease causation and the interplay of exterior stimuli with interior phenomena. Moreover, I want to suggest that thinking through spontaneous hydrophobia's continuities with and departures from hypochondriasis may help us sharpen our understanding of phobia's early connotative potential. Specifically, this section will argue that phobia came to function in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries a kind of competitor term, at the level of medical nomenclature, for describing a condition on which hypochondria had long kept a conspicuous monopoly.

One of the best pieces of evidence demonstrating this relationship is a spate of articles in the 1830s, which address a condition called "choleraphobia." Physicians used this portmanteau to account for cases of a performative cholera, where dread alone

appeared to inspire an imitation of symptoms, which could themselves become fatal (Tellier). These articles echo comparable, contemporaneous writings on what Justine Murison has described compellingly as hypochondriacal “sympathy”—a dangerous feeling of kinship, by which one’s body is transformed into something otherwise exterior and foreign. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, phobia came to represent a comparable crisis, but with an important twist. If hypochondriasis may be said to have conveyed unchecked sympathies, phobia described, more precisely, an intimacy paradoxically underwritten by aversion, discord, and loathing. That is, phobia gestured to a particular enigma: the irony of an imitative cathexis premised on total revulsion. To adapt what Catherine Belling has described as an ontological “condition of doubt,” which makes hypochondria intrinsic and prerequisite to the production of medical knowledge, we might characterize antebellum phobia further as a precise offshoot of this skepticism: cleaving toward an all-consuming anticipatory dread, on one side, and an emulative fidelity to one’s worst hunches on the other.

Spontaneous hydrophobia attained value as a metaphor in the U.S. in these terms, not only through a widely circulating transatlantic medical print culture, but also in dialogue with democratic crises of the early republic and antebellum period—a phenomenon subsequent chapters will explore in depth. To understand these national valences, we need to get a still more nuanced picture of what phobia signified to early Americans in its allusive tethers to canine madness. The phobia defined in dialogue with rabies narratives described something beyond an imitative fear transmitted in print. Phobia took the more precise form of a temporality of dread: a state of anticipation, oriented toward a looming hydrophobic catastrophe, which people often tried to keep

concealed from friends and loved ones. As a temporality of concealed, irrational dread, phobia became familiar as a psychological state undermining social life surreptitiously: an affect driving one out of sync with exterior publics and toward a painful solipsism characterized by shame, secrecy, and terror. Understanding why phobia became such a powerful cultural and political reference point in the U.S. requires that we trace how this experience—of dreading hydrophobia, to the extent that this anticipatory dread became an incapacitating pathology in its own right—became a useful metaphor for re-conceptualizing national anxieties, and their potential for cure. Some important context clues emerge in Neal’s story. Smith disrupts “communion,” literally and figuratively, because he has kept his internal crisis private out of embarrassment; thus, his symptoms, when they surface, strike neighbors as chaotic and illegible. Neal’s “The Haunted Man” thus offers a sense of how a particular social dynamic, between private pathology and public expression, prompted Neal to explore the possibility for intimate fraternity to bring psychological crises to the surface. This dynamic became a useful metaphor for exploring the hidden psychic dimensions of a national body politic as well.

Far beyond the hydrophobia metaphor, physicians on both sides of the Atlantic were beginning to take the psychological dimensions of national politics more seriously by the late eighteenth century. Much of this interest stemmed from a growing strain of medical optimism, consonant with what Foucault famously describes as the congealing power of a “clinical gaze.” In her groundbreaking study *Console and Classify*, Goldstein explores this congealing authority further to account for the rise of a French psychiatric profession. “By the closing decades of the eighteenth century,” Goldstein writes, “mere confinement of lunatics had come to seem insufficient. The state, in its new liaison with

science, began to entertain a more ambitious aim: cure of madness, the conversion of blighted insane subjects into sane healthy ones who could safely reenter ordinary society” (42). The “novel idea” at this moment, Goldstein clarifies, was not merely the “curability of insanity” but the “optimistic article of faith” that “with the diligent application of rational measures, the number of cures could be made to increase appreciably and perhaps indefinitely” (43). Moreover, governments held a duty to “promote such measures.”

Both Foucault and Goldstein focus on how these shifts in medicine gathered momentum from the age of revolutions, emphasizing the French Revolution in particular. Foucault famously argues that, alongside attempts to democratize governmental authority, the duty of the physician was being translated to an imperative at the heart of the revolutionary project: “The first task of the doctor [was] political: the struggle against disease must begin with a war against bad government” (33). Along these lines, an increasing sovereignty of medical power became in large part legitimated by a perceived kinship between the fight against despotism and the promotion of national health. In exploring potential analogues in the early U.S. republic, Rush once again proves to be a useful coordinate. A 1788 essay titled “An Account of the Influence of the Military and Political Events of the American Revolution upon the Human Body” shows that Rush had likewise begun to conceptualize the health of the nation in terms of mental wellness. Most interesting in the essay is the way Rush endeavors to embrace a vast psychological diversity catalyzed in the time of war and in its wake. As one of the essay’s fundamental arguments, Rush asserts, “The scenes of war and government which [the revolution] introduced, were new to the greatest part of the inhabitants of the United States, and

operated with all the force of *novelty* upon the human mind.” Rather than corresponding to illness only, these “novel” forces run the gamut in terms of severity and type. Rush tells of one individual who died of “a violent emotion of political joy” upon hearing that Lord Cornwallis’s army had been captured. Elsewhere, Rush references a condition called “Protection Fever,” which, following the war, overwhelmed loyalists, who found themselves friendless in a new political order—many to the point of death. Later, Rush goes on to suggest that revolutionaries themselves have since exemplified a species of “insanity” he calls “*Anarchia*.” “The termination of the war by the peace in 1783, did not terminate the American revolution,” Rush writes. “The minds of the citizens of the United States were wholly unprepared for their new situation. The excess of the passion for liberty, inflamed by the successful issue of the war, produced, in many people, opinions and conduct which could not be removed by reason, nor restrained by government.” In exploring all of these conditions together, Rush concludes that the war had the unforeseen effect of producing an early republic replete with new and competing psychologies, which citizens had yet to reckon with. As demonstrated elsewhere in his well-known work on diseases of the mind, Rush believed the health of the young republic depended on recognizing and treating these emergent psychological states.

One of the most interesting elements of Rush’s essay is that, like Neal’s “The Haunted Man,” it shows us a kind of history-of-emotions methodology in the making. Rush and Neal both frame emotion as a dynamic entity, susceptible to mutation over time. Rather explicitly, Rush even cites as inspiration for his piece the idea that the “*novelty*” of historical forces on the human mind has effectively created unfamiliar forms emotion might take. The suggestion, moreover, is that these experimental forms,

obscured by virtue of their clandestine illegibility, have the potential to wreck the viability of a body politic when left unacknowledged. In exploring George Lippard's pursuit of related themes in his 1847 memorialization of the war *Legends of the American Revolution, 1776; Or, Washington and His Generals*, I want to argue that it was within the broad context of such anxieties, over the relation between individual and national health, that the hydrophobia metaphor began trending across a range of writings. In its representation of a pathological temporality concealed from public recognition, yet equally inclined toward imitation, the phobic imagination that began to materialize in this moment compelled a number of writers to explore novel intersections between the psychological energies underlying fictional genres and their potential for deviant mutations in an American context.

The use of competing psychological plotlines to meditate on national themes finds an especially compelling formulation in Lippard's "The Ninth Hour," found toward the end of *Legends of the American Revolution*. Before delving into "The Ninth Hour," it will be useful to get a brief sense of what Lippard intended with the *Legends* as a whole. Lippard tends to be remembered, much like Neal, for being a contemporary of Edgar Allan Poe who likewise found success writing gothic fiction—the epitome of Lippard's craft being his best-selling, sensationalist novel *The Quaker City; Or, The Monks of Monk Hall* (1845). However, Lippard became known for his dedication to the development of a genre he called "American Historical Romance" too, an interest reflected best in his published legends of the Revolutionary War. Before publishing the legends, which appeared first in serial form in Philadelphia's *Saturday Courier*, Lippard wrote a letter to James Fenimore Cooper in 1844, in which he described an idea for a

semi-monthly magazine revolving around American historical fiction. Lippard begins the letter by confessing that he has already dedicated a story to Cooper titled “Herbert Tracy, a Romance of the Battle-of-Germantown,” despite the fact that they have not yet become acquainted. With characteristic effusiveness, Lippard admits the dedication betrays a certain presumptuousness on his part, but he insists that if Cooper knew “how many weary hours of pain, and wrong and orphanage” were alleviated “by the perusal of ‘The Pioneers,’ ‘The Last of the Mohicans,’ ‘The Prairie,’ ‘The Spy,’ or ‘The Red River,’” not to mention “how a yearning desire grew up within me to testify my enthusiastic veneration for your genius,” an “excuse” might be discerned, “for linking your name to my crude effort” (1). Only in a haphazard postscript does Lippard at last arrive at his motive for writing. He mentions, feigning sudden inspiration, his idea for a semi-monthly devoted to “American Historical Romance.” With characteristic ambition, Lippard goes on to explain, “In every two numbers an Original Novel, Romance, or Story, illustrative of some noted Revolutionary Battlefield will be published entire. Occasionally, a History of a Revolutionary Battle-field, embracing all the Fact, Tradition, and Legend connected with the occurrence, will be published, in place of the Novel, with a Map, etc.” (2-3). To get the project underway, he asks Cooper for a publishable letter of confidence, “stating briefly” his “favorable views” on the endeavor. The letter concludes with Lippard clarifying, “The title of the magazine will be (in accordance with the advice of my friends) *Lippard’s Magazine of American Historical Romance*”—a title he underlines three times for emphasis.

No evidence indicates Cooper responded to Lippard’s request. Nor did *Lippard’s Magazine of American Historical Romance* ever get off the ground. Regardless, the letter

is interesting for the insight it provides into Lippard's sense of his position in a national literary canon, at a point when he was beginning to develop a genre that would have its apex in *Legends of the American Revolution*. To return to the questions posed above, what is perhaps most interesting regarding how Lippard's aspirations materialize in the collection itself is the way his narration toggles between gothic and romantic plots in order to balance recurring scenes of terror and suspense with moments of intimate resolution. Nowhere is this toggling better represented than in the story of his most sympathetic (and potentially rabid) character, General George Murray. In one trying moment, Murray is captured while on a mission across enemy lines and strapped to a keg of gunpowder. Upon being captured, Murray first attempts to feign loyalty to the king. To test his allegiance, the British soldiers demand he pass a trial:

Do you see that keg o' powder thar? We'll attach a slow match to it—a match that'll take three minutes to burn out! You will sit on that keg!—Afore the three minutes is out we'll return to the house, and see how you stand the trial! If there's a drop of sweat on your forehead, or any sign of paleness on your cheek, we will conclude that you are a rebel and deserve to die! (498)

For three excruciating minutes, the trial proceeds in this fashion. The narrator steadily watches Murray's face, interspersing descriptions of his nonchalant demeanor with updates on the passage of time. "Not a motion—not a movement of the hand which holds his watch—not a tremor of the face!" the narrator explains (499). Shortly after, the prose continues, in the present tense: "Two minutes have expired." Then, "The half-minute is gone." Finally, "the match emits a sudden flame, sparkles, and cracks out," at which



point, Murray cries to himself, “Nine years, nine days! At last, thank God, it is over!”

The exclamation is given no context in the moment. Immediately after the line is delivered, the narrator reports calmly: “These were his last words, before the powder exploded. He folded his arms, closed his eyes, and gave his soul to God” (499).

This explosive ending turns out to be a hoax on the part of the narrator, who afterward explains the events that actually followed. The keg, it turns out, was not full of powder and did not therefore explode. In a series of fortunate turns, Murray eventually escapes the British as well. At last, in a rather abrupt segue into sentimentalism, the night Murray escapes turns out also to be the night of his wedding to his fiancé Isabel. At last readers discover that Murray’s precarious life in battle has coincided, unbeknownst to comrades, with a separate suspense of a psychological variety, independent of the war. The reveal commences during the wedding celebrations. Just as he is beginning to take a ceremonial sip from an ornate goblet of wine, something goes wrong. “He seized it,” the narrator explains, “as with the grasp of despair, or as a soldier precipitated from a fortress might clutch the naked blade of a sword, to stay his fall—his blue eyes dilating all the while he raised it to his lips.” Suddenly, the goblet falls. The narrator explains, “No words can picture the surprise, the horror, the awe of the wedding guests.” When Murray stands and exits the room with Isabel we are told that for all wedding guests what ensued was “an half hour of terrible suspense” (506). Only once the bride and groom have found privacy does Murray explain: “The thing which I feared has come upon me!”

Murray proceeds to tell Isabel that as a child he had been bitten by a rabid dog named Wolfe. A local healer known for her ability to cure such injuries was summoned; however, she came only to deliver bad news, whispering in Murray’s ear that he “would

go mad on *the ninth hour of the ninth day of the ninth year!*” At the time of the wedding toast, Murray realized the day was at hand, with the ninth hour rapidly approaching.

Murray goes on to characterize for Isabel the passage of time, from the day he was bitten to the present:

Need I tell you how this popular superstition fastened on my mind until it became a prophecy? Perchance the poison, communicated by the fang of the dog, was already working in my veins, perchance—but why multiply words? This awful fear gradually poisoned my whole existence; it drove me from my books into the army. I began to thirst for death. I sought him in every battle; O, how terrible ‘to long for death that cometh not!’ For I was haunted by a fear—not merely the fear of going mad, but the fear of the ‘ninth day of the ninth year’—the fear of dying a death at once horrible and grotesque—dying like a venomous beast, my form torn by convulsions, my reason crushed, my last breath howling forth a yell of horrible laughter— (507)

For the first time in the *Legends*, Murray discloses this lifetime spent in accumulating dread. Here, however, Isabel and the sentimental marriage plot she represents intervene.

“[S]he had heard,” the narrator explains, “of great minds being haunted all their lives by a horrible fear. Some, the fear of being buried alive—some, the fear of going mad—some, the fear of dying of loathsome disease.” When the clock strikes nine, Isabel lunges for a glass of water, sitting on a mosaic table beside her, and drives it toward Murray’s face.

“Drink, George,” she exclaims, “and fear not! If you love me drink!” The climax causes a “nervous shudder” to run through him, but then, just as it appears Murray will succumb,

the narrator exclaims, “He drinks!” Murray and Isabel safely embrace. The narrator describes the scene that follows: “So, spreading forth his arms—as the horror of years rushed upon his soul—he fell weeping on her bosom” (508). Here transpires the affective correlate to Murray’s liberation from the powder-keg episode: In a moment of psychological resolve, prompted by Isabel’s domestic injunction, Murray welcomes a promise of melodramatic, lachrymose relief. At this juncture, none other than General George Washington storms through the doors to witness the scene of the bridegroom weeping in his beloved’s arms, a moment Washington beholds with astonishment. Located in a section of the volume titled “Romance of the Revolution,” the legend seems the quintessential example of this overarching conceit. The resolution to Murray’s lifetime of private dread arrives neither with his delivery from British captivity, nor with his wedding, but rather with a psychological transformation from dread to tearful embrace under the approving gaze of his future president.

Most curious about this negotiation of plots is the way Lippard couches Murray’s psychological drama within the text’s overarching national romance. What makes Murray’s story compelling, in other words, has to do with a complexity of form, by which Lippard situates an unfolding gothic genre of feeling—a phobic anticipation of disease confirmation—within the romance of national unity, effected through a theatrical fusion of war and marriage. Conversely, the underlying threat of “The Ninth Hour” becomes the possibility that these competing genres might fail to be synthesized. Murray’s fear that he will find his “form torn by convulsions,” expressed in his monologue to Isabel, becomes a metaphor equally for the precariousness of Lippard’s literary form and the national trajectory it represents: the possibility that these dissonant

temporalities might splinter the nation irreparably into competing fragments. Indeed, if we turn to the original publication of Murray's story in the *Saturday Courier*, we find that, in its earliest appearance, Lippard took care to depict these competing plots by publishing "The Ninth Hour" in two installments, along the edge of an unexpected fault line. When first published, Murray's powder keg episode and the disclosure of his lifetime of hydrophobic dread transpired across two separate issues. As Lippard had done elsewhere, he used the division to orchestrate a cliffhanger, which would entice readers to return. Yet the intuitive cliffhanger, Murray sitting solemnly on the keg of gunpowder, does not actually transpire until the second half. Rather, Lippard chose for his unlikely cliffhanger Murray's vague, unsettling reference to the "*ninth hour, of the ninth day, of the ninth year*"—the meaning of which is revealed only in the latter installment. At this break, Lippard leaves readers with the open threat that a partly concealed plotline of phobic dread will overwhelm the designs of his national romance. While the two plots become reconciled under Washington's approval by the story's end, there remains in the act of reading the alternate trajectory the second installment might have taken—one narrative tracking the successive dramas of warfare, subordinated to a solipsistic demise characterized by a debilitating, imitative dread.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Playing with serial fault lines is a familiar theme in Lippard. In an essay titled "Lippard in Part(s)," Christopher Looby has suggested that Lippard's publication of *The Quaker City* in ten successive parts should not be taken as a matter of course editorial choice (1). Rather, the "dismembered form" in which it originally captivated its readership, Looby argues, serves both as "a material analog for other kinds of dismemberment within the novel and also an embodiment of the antinomy of publicity and secrecy" (2). A comparable reading might be applied to an effect Lippard achieved in publishing his *Legends* serially, as a string of successive tales.

## {CODA I}

### IMP OF THE AVERSE:

#### REENCOUNTERING THE *IDÉE FIXE* OF EDGAR ALLAN POE'S "BERENICE"

Neal and Lippard's interest in phobia as a variable source of disease imitation indicates they may have been familiar with Rush's writings on hydrophobia. In Neal, this becomes valuable as a way to figure the ironic threat of medical print culture as its capacity to produce emotive pathologies in naïve readerships. For Lippard, it offered a way to explore ways of reconciling individual pathology to a national temporality. Nevertheless, it remains to be shown how these reciprocal developments in medicine and literature gesture beyond understandings of hydrophobia, in particular, to phobia's burgeoning lexical independence as an available suffix. Here, Rush again played a role. Rush's turn to an etiology based in fear in *Medical Inquiries and Observations* recapitulated an earlier writing inspired by hydrophobia in an amusing piece titled "On the Different Species of Phobia," published in *The Columbian* a decade earlier. Widely considered the earliest extensive taxonomy of phobias in Anglophone print culture, Rush's "On the Different Species of Phobia" begins by explaining that while reading "a work by the celebrated Dr. Cullen, in which he has arranged diseases under distinct classes—orders—genera and species," his "eye was caught with the word HYDROPHOBIA which our ingenious author subdivides into two different species," the forms *rabiosa (vulgaris)* and *simplex (spontanea)*. The article goes on, "Without detracting from the merit of Dr. Cullen, I cannot help thinking, that the genus of the disease which he has named Hydrophobia, should rather have been PHOBIA, and that the number and names of the species should have been taken from the names of the objects

of fear or aversion” (110). Rush names, among others Dirt Phobia, Church Phobia, Rat Phobia, Rum Phobia, Thunder Phobia, and Death Phobia.

Rush’s essay would be reprinted multiple times, in the U.S. and England alike. By the end of the eighteenth century, new phobias were cropping up. We find Thomas Jefferson, for instance, lamenting American “Anglophobia” in a 1793 letter to James Madison. As I discuss in the next chapter, by the 1830s abolitionists would go on to develop the most robust repurposing of the suffix in the antebellum period, cultivating a transatlantic rhetorical trend of citing “colorphobia” and “Negrophobia” as pathologies integral to slavery’s endurance. In all of these cases, new phobias depended heavily on an analogy to hydrophobia in the social disposition they conjured. However, an important development commenced in phobia’s signification shortly after the appearance of Rush’s essay. While phobia continued to be considered a serious state of disease in the context of hydrophobia, its adaptability as a suffix began to occupy a vague middle ground between medicine and social satire. This coda attempts to flesh out a fuller picture of phobia’s queer philological attachments in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by touching on phobia’s uncertain signification in these terms.

The best example of phobia’s early straddling of satirical and medical valences in the late eighteenth century occurred among British writers, shortly after Rush’s essays on phobia and mania had been reprinted in London. Beginning in the 1790s, an array of British writers began speculating that one could develop an intimate phobia of one’s immediate domestic surroundings. Early experimentation with this idea appeared in an article titled “On the Domiphobia, or Dread of Home,” published by a physician in *The Weekly Entertainer* in 1796. As though presenting a riddle, the piece begins: “For the

amusement of your readers, I am induced to offer you a few remarks on a disorder that is very prevalent in the months of June and July, is at the height in August, begins to decline in September, and about the end of October generally disappears, though much will depend upon the weather” (221). Offering an additional clue, the author observes that the disorder, despite its ubiquity, has thus far “escaped the attention of Sauvages, Vogel, Cullen, and all our late nosologists.” After much appetite whetting, the condition is at last revealed. Readers discover it to be “the domiphobia, or dread of home”—a disease of the summer months, when families find themselves afflicted with a fervor for vacationing to spa towns and to the coasts. “The mother, a remarkably healthy-looking, and indeed very handsome woman, complains of a wasting of the flesh, want of appetite, listlessness, and dejection,” while the daughters “though possessed of the finest bloom of complexion, are inclined to consumption, have also lost their appetites, and are, to use their mother’s expression, in a very alarming situation” (221-2). The sons, in turn, complain of “shortness of breath”—an inconvenience belonging to the smoke saturating London. Somewhat predictably, the only agreeable cure is a “jaunt to a watering place” (222). The author suggests that domiphobia, in this respect, is equally a “hydro-mania.” This hybrid attraction to water and revulsion for home tends to attack in the context of groups. In such cases, those already afflicted with the disorder find within them “a desire of communicating the disease.” Thus inspired, they spew the “miasmata, or contagious particles, which will affect all present.” With tongue-in-cheek disappointment, the physician concludes, confessing, “in the curative part, I have failed” at discerning or dispensing “much information” (224).

The satirical literature on domophobia would enjoy a curiously robust longevity. In 1815, a British writer by the name of Thomas Skinner Surr went so far as to publish a novel titled *The Magic of Wealth* organized around domophobia as a central theme. As Arthur M. Axelrad has noted, the great antagonist of Surr's novel is a banker named Flimflam who embarks on erecting a "watering-place," or summer vacationing destination, "known as Flimflamton" (Axelrad 429). The third chapter of Surr's novel places the fashion exemplified by Flimflamton in terms of a ruthless, ravaging domophobia (spelled this time with an "o"): "It was now '*the season for watering-places,*' or in other words, it was the period of the year, when that tormenting disease, peculiar to the climate of England, '*the Domophobia,*' rages with all its violence" (Surr 53). The "first symptoms," Surr explains, differ "according to the life and habits of the persons affected," since "no rank is free from the contagion" (54). But he emphasizes that the predominant sign of the disease is that the concept of "Home" is radically reconceived:

'Home' appears, not only to have lost its attraction, but to have undergone a change that renders it quite *horrible*; the poor sufferers enduring nearly similar torments at the sight of 'Home,' which the appearance of water produces upon the subjects of hydrophobia. (56)

The great mystery of the disease thus lies in how such a reversal first transpires. "It is still, however, very doubtful," Surr continues, "...whether domophobia be the origin of watering places, or whether these said watering places at first created, or now encourage, the continuance of the malady" (56). The underlying enigma, in other words, is one of



willpower: does the mind simply adapt (or fail to adapt) to an available topography, or does the mind, by contrast, effectively make its world?

Clearly enough, “On the Domiphobia” and *The Magic of Wealth* thrive on a strain of satire run amok. At the same time, we discover by way of neighboring appropriations of the diagnosis that its rhetorical purchase depended heavily on a close proximity to other established diseases of the mind. The counterintuitive conceit of making home “quite horrible,” for one, linked the literature around domiphobia to another established malady of the period: the disease known as *nostalgia*, referred to in popular parlance as “homesickness,” which had appeared across multiple major works of eighteenth-century nosology to account for the deleterious effects a distance from home could have on one’s health.<sup>29</sup> Domiphobia imagined an alternate state of existence along these lines, where a combination of boredom and wealth created a restlessness for escape. With interest in this inversion, Robert Southey’s *Letters from England*, published under the pseudonym and guise of Spanish traveler Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella in 1808, takes up this connection between a dread of home and the disease of homesickness at length. Apparently unimpressed with domiphobia as a neologism, Southey coined his own word: a concept he called “oikophobia,” inspired by the Greek root *oikos* meaning home or household. In a section under the book’s thirtieth letter titled “Watering Places,” Southey begins by

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<sup>29</sup> Coined by the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer in his *Dissertation Medica de Nostalgia*, published in 1688, nostalgia had been formed as a compound of the Greek words νόστος (*nóstos*), meaning homecoming, and ἄλγος (*álgos*), meaning pain or suffering. As Nicholas Dames notes in his study of the disease, nostalgia’s “usual haunt” in the eighteenth century had been the military. More precisely, Dames explains that “the ‘ecological niche’” of nostalgia “seems to have been army camps and naval vessels, where mobility of an enforced and newly vast sort was common” (30). Such spaces consisted in socialities premised on sustained uprootedness, where the longing to return home became so great it could turn deadly.

asserting, “The English migrate as regularly as rooks” (346). He continues by noting how boldly the trend defies the logic internal to nostalgia: “Home-sickness is a disease which has no existence in a certain state of civilization or of luxury, and instead of it these islanders are subject to periodical fits of what I shall beg leave to call *oikophobia*, a disorder with which physicians are perfectly well acquainted, though it may not yet have been catalogued in the nomenclature of nosology” (346). Linking the craze for spa towns to coastal vacationing, the passage goes on:

In old times, that is to say, two generations ago, mineral springs were the only places of resort. Now the Nereids have as many votaries as the Naiads, and the tribes of wealth and fashion swarm down to the sea coast as punctually as the land crabs in the West Indies march the same way. These people, who have unquestionably the best houses of any people in Europe, and more conveniences about them to render home comfortable, crowd themselves into the narrow apartments and dark streets of a little country town, just at that time of the year when instinct seems to make us, like the lark, desirous of as much sky-room as possible. (346-7)

With an interest in the migration not merely of families but of larger groups, Southey depicts *oikophobia* as a pathology formed from shared animal instincts. As the chapter continues, the comedy surrounding the fad begins to wane slightly, giving way to genuine analysis. “In their haunts,” Southey’s Spanish narrator explains dubiously, “visitors are capricious,” quick to desert one coast for another. The only continuity proves to be “not the desirableness of the accommodations, not the convenience of the shore for their ostensible purpose, bathing,” but rather “the sake of seeing company” (347-8). He

concludes, “Wherever one of the queen bees of fashion alights, a whole swarm follows her” (8). Thus, while nostalgia disappears under certain conditions of luxury, such luxury should be understood to enjoy no intellectualism; rather, it is the extravagance of insects, or crustaceans, seeking patterns of social movement devoid of conscious reflection.

Domophobia’s reliance upon nostalgia as a kind of perfect opposite is interesting for its enactment of a makeshift bridge between medical taxonomy and social commentary, with one disease being satirical and the other a widely known threat. Yet domophobia’s proximity to disease becomes even more curious by way of another relation—the analogy to hypochondriasis referenced previously. This relationship between phobia and hypochondriasis becomes clearest in two writings, published eleven years apart, in 1810 and 1821 respectively. In 1810, a doctor and member of the Royal College of Physicians of London named John Reid picked up the term for a piece in the *Monthly Magazine*. Like previous writings that had taken up the diagnosis as more or less facetious, Reid begins in a seemingly satirical mode. “The periodical propensity to migration,” he begins, “is beginning to shew itself amongst the more opulent inhabitants of London” (588). Playing with a similar conceit—that the disease represents the antithesis of the fear associated with rabies—he goes on, “This domophobia may be opposed to the hydrophobia, inasmuch as a patient affected with the former complaint, so far from betraying any dread of water, is for the most part propelled by an almost irresistible impulse, to places of resort where that element is to be found in the greatest abundance.” Reid pictures the essential cause of the disease as an exchange of forces. London, “a nucleus for an accumulated population,” emanates a “force” that “drive[s] to a distance from it a large proportion of those inhabitants who are not fastened to the spot

upon which they live by the rivet of necessity.” While not as eloquent or clever as previous forays in the domiphobia corpus, Reid nevertheless appears, at first glance, to maintain a satirical tone.

In following, however, we discover the physician’s worries may actually be more sincere than they first appear. Rather than slipping into a cheap exchange of puns, Reid turns abruptly to emphasize the importance of the human mind, as a stage for the interplay of London’s centripetal and centrifugal social pressures. We have neither “noxious” air nor the influence of “circumambient atoms” to blame, nor heightened “temperature[s],” he proceeds. On the contrary, we must attribute the foundation of domiphobic migrations to some “internal power of resistance in the mind, which, when roused into action, is in most instances sufficient to counteract the hostile agency of extraneous causes.” To understand the human and all of its motivations, the true physician must therefore take into account “the beating of the passions,” which he argues are ready objects for the “science of medicine.” Here the piece arrives at its central proverb: “He who in the study or the treatment of the human machinery, overlooks the intellectual part of it, cannot but entertain very incorrect notions of and fall into gross and sometimes fatal blunders in the means which he adopts for its regulation or repair.” When looking at a restless, enervated subject, one must be on alert for the “worm of mental malady,” so often discovered to be “gnawing inwardly and undetected at the root of the constitution.” Hovering between witty social critique and genuine anxiety over the social frenzy for the fad of waterside holidays, Reid’s article becomes striking in its tonal inconsistencies. The reason, it would seem, lies precisely in the competing connotations phobia had begun to navigate during this period on both sides of the Atlantic. This

tension becomes even clearer when we discover that later in his career, Reid would decide that what he had called domiphobia in the earlier essay was better conceptualized within the broader psychological category of the more capacious concept, hypochondriasis. By 1821, Reid would go on to adapt his piece on domiphobia for inclusion in a larger volume published in London titled, *Essays on Hypochondriasis and Other Nervous Affections*. Rather than work domiphobia into the larger category, the book drops the term domiphobia entirely, even while retaining the majority of the original text. Finding the alternate diagnosis to be the more compelling category, Reid funnels his earlier arguments toward an elaboration of the experience of hypochondriasis instead.

Reid's decision to make this edit provides insight into phobia's shifting value as an analytic in the late 1700s and early 1800s. In tracking the early literature on phobia, we find that as the term began to compete with hypochondria to describe comparable phenomena, it went on to take a deviant trajectory in the antebellum period. Ultimately, the cholera-phobia example cited earlier stands out as fairly unique, in that it shows a case in which a new phobia made it successfully into the pages of medical literature. For the most part, beyond a handful of exceptions (others include "lepraphobia" and "syphilophobia"), the suffix would fail to achieve great prominence in medical taxonomies beyond its affiliation with hydrophobia, until the late 1860s and 1870s. Instead, phobia would find its greatest cultural traction by moving laterally from its origins in disease classification into the terrain of social satire. In this lateral move, phobia would continue to imitate the authority of medical nomenclature, drawing heavily on an analogy to hydrophobia well into the nineteenth century, yet its rhetorical purchase

became, in a sense, democratized. As a category of analysis, phobia became familiar as a social diagnosis any writer might adapt on behalf of a corresponding political appeal or movement. In these contexts, phobia's imitative valences became more abstract. To be phobic of another person or social demographic was not to become that object of fear *per se*, yet it continued to signify a phenomenon of losing oneself, of surrendering one's identity, to a rabid obsession with the community feared. Whether defined in terms of race, religion, or nation, social phobias repurposed the mimicry associated with spontaneous rabies by invoking this loss of self-mastery as an effect of a performative ideology, transmitted not by any literal breaking of the skin, but rather by a discursive contagion disseminated in and as language.

In concluding this section, I want to suggest that this lateral move may help us understand how one other major contributors to antebellum letters, whom we might be inclined to remember for his philia of phobias, navigated the concept's fluctuating connotations in his own writing. In tracking the rise of a phobic imagination in U.S. literature, one might be predisposed to look to the fiction of Edgar Allan Poe. Poe famously cathected to scenes of phobic debilitation repeatedly in his writing, the most persistent being the dread of premature burial, integral not just to the story actually titled "The Premature Burial," but also to "The Cask of Amontillado," "The Fall of the House of Usher," "The Black Cat," "The Tell-Tale Heart," and "Berenice." This fear has since been given the appellation "taphophobia," taken from the Greek root "taphos" (τάφος), meaning "tomb." What we might consider interesting about Poe's exploration of these fears, however, is precisely that he resisted the use of the -phobia suffix, even as that term began to enter its first period of Anglophone proliferation, contemporaneous with

his career. One question this omission presents is this: why should the obvious candidate for the architect of a phobic imagination in American fiction have avoided –phobia’s availability for wordplay, at the same moment the term’s popularity was beginning to gain traction in other realms?

Our best available answer is the widening gap between phobia’s associations with medicine, in the context of rabies, and its cultural capital as a weapon of satire. By the 1830s, phobia’s affiliations with satire had begun to accumulate connotations of camp absurdity, making it suitable for comedy, pun-making, and social parody, but also increasingly ill-suited to evocations of horror. Perhaps the strongest example of this tendency toward a camp sensibility is a somewhat entertaining piece of slapstick short fiction by Joseph Holt Ingraham titled, “Spheeksphobia: Or, The Adventures of Abel Stingflyer, A.M.: A Tragic Tale,” published in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1837, just months after Poe concluded his editorial post at the same journal. Translating as a “dread of wasps,” “Spheekhsphobia” takes a form uncannily similar to Neal’s “The Haunted Man” (to such an extent it seems likely Ingraham’s story took inspiration from the earlier tale), with the distinction that the story is so deliberately ridiculous that it permits nothing like the empathy Neal orchestrates between narrator, Smith, and reader to drive his plot forward. At the same time, we find phobia’s imitative connotations in abundance. As the story begins, Abel Stingflyer, the unfortunate victim of the spheeksphobia under scrutiny, appears careening toward the narrator and his horse, as though in the manner of an insect. “His advance was not direct, but zig-zag,” the narrator explains, “now he would dart with velocity to the right, and now as swiftly to the left, anon plunging under the bushes lining the road-side, and then diving down, and

scrambling...as if charging at me, filling the air with his cries all the while” (585). Only subsequently, by way of a letter from Stingflyer, does the narrator learn the stranger had been desperately attempting to escape a wasp. Stingflyer explains:

I am an unfortunate victim of Entomology: not of the science, but of every species of insect of which the science treateth; more especially the bee, wasp, and hornet, and all and singular of the *irritable genus*, besides the horn-bug, gad-fly, dragon-fly, and each and every of those loud-humming insects that buzz about at night—yea, verily the whole tribe of Europa, or insects, are my aversion, from which I stand in bodily terror. (585)

In short, the story is about horror, aversion, and dread, but only in the most intellectual and comically distant sense of those terms. The evident goal of Ingraham’s style is to situate his readers’ affect in a preclusion of empathy—in other words, to appreciate a spectacle of a phobic cathexis so solipsistically contained, one can only take pleasure in being utterly outside it. By the end of the story, the narrator discovers Stingflyer living more or less peacefully, partnering with another man to buy and sell goods in Natchez, Mississippi, under the firm agreement that their store will never trade in sugar, molasses, or the like.

In reading “Spheekspobia,” which Poe would have no doubt encountered due to his continued affiliation with the *Southern Literary Messenger*, it is not difficult to see why Poe would have wished to steer clear of phobia’s shifting aesthetic sensibility. As the next two chapters will show, these new associations would eventually shape phobia’s availability for adaptation in generative ways. Nevertheless, for Poe, phobia appears to have fallen largely outside the mood he wanted to create for readers. In meditating briefly



on this incompatibility, it seems apparent that one element of phobia's signification, more than all others, struck Poe as antithetical to his vision for delineating gothic affect. Specifically, this element had to do with phobia's status as cathexis, which is to say, its particular manifestation as a pathological investment in a singular object. On the surface, as observed above, this seems to be one of the most permanent themes of Poe's corpus. States of private obsession, unravelling one's psyche to the point of insanity, collapse, murder, and self-sabotage, drive Poe's work. Yet the monotone particularities of phobia's signification—meaning the particularity of the affect it designates, but also, counterintuitively enough, the ascendance of a singular object, by way of a yet untested portmanteau, to the status of nomenclature—would have actually failed to meet Poe's conditions for a genuine experience of horror.

Perhaps no story better delineates these specific parameters shaping Poe's interest in pathological attentiveness than the story "Berenice," wherein the operative object cathexis on the part of the narrator, Aegeus, resides in his fiancée Berenice's teeth. As her body deteriorates from an evidently incurable disease, Berenice's teeth remain white and uncompromised, as though operating with a life force unto themselves. The story follows the narrator's obsession with Berenice's teeth until the end of the story, when readers learn by means beyond the narrator's control that he has buried his fiancée in her tomb prematurely, yet not before also removing each of her teeth and collecting them in a box, which spills onto the floor in a spectacular reveal as the story terminates. For the purposes of the present analysis, what stands out as most remarkable in the narrator's unfolding insanity is that while the nature of his pathological obsession resides, self-evidently enough, in the narrator's over-investment in Berenice's teeth, Poe takes care to

complicate this exchange of libidinal and murderous investments. The narrator explains his condition as “monomania,” a diagnosis that had successfully made it into nosological taxonomies on both sides of the Atlantic. “This monomania, if I must so term it,” the narrator writes, “consisted in a morbid irritability of those properties of the mind in metaphysical science termed the attentive”—“a nervous intensity of interest with which, in my case, the powers of meditation (not to speak technically) busied and buried themselves, in the contemplation of even the most ordinary objects of the universe.”

Yet, as the narrator’s revelation proceeds, we discover that this monomania is not restricted solely to Berenice’s teeth. Rather, part of the terror Poe unfolds has to do with an ironic unselectiveness, wherein the history of the narrator’s deviant attentiveness juxtaposes Berenice’s teeth with the most mundane, daily fixations. “To muse for long unwearied hours,” Aegeus explains,

with my attention riveted to some frivolous device on the margin, or in the typography of a book; to become absorbed, for the better part of a summer's day, in a quaint shadow falling aslant upon the tapestry or upon the floor; to lose myself, for an entire night, in watching the steady flame of a lamp, or the embers of a fire; to dream away whole days over the perfume of a flower; to repeat, monotonously, some common word, until the sound, by dint of frequent repetition, ceased to convey any idea whatever to the mind; to lose all sense of motion or physical existence, by means of absolute bodily quiescence long and obstinately persevered in: such were a few of the most common and least pernicious vagaries induced by a condition of the mental faculties, not, indeed, altogether

unparalleled, but certainly bidding defiance to anything like analysis or explanation.

What is most interesting about the disease of monomania the narrator claims, then, is that it is only in a certain sense “mono-”: not reducible to a singular obsession, but rather characterized by a kind of inability to multitask. It is worth noting, moreover, that mania as an antebellum affect, and as Poe depicts it, was rather capacious—neither a form of –phobia, nor –philia, but rather a state of derangement so complete, it nearly occluded affective particularity. The irony underlying the narrative reveals of “Berenice” lie in these lurking ambiguities of motive and intent. Toward the climax of the story, readers witness the narrator’s perceptive faculties worsening. “Then came the full fury of my monomania,” he explains, “and I struggled in vain against its strange and irresistible influence. In the multiplied objects of the external world I had no thoughts but for the teeth. For these I longed with a phrenzied desire.” While this confession might seem the necessary key for unlocking the drama of the story, it occludes much more than it reveals. By the end of the tale, when the box holding Berenice’s teeth falls to floor, at which point readers are left only with “a rattling sound,” accompanied by the visual of “some instruments of dental surgery, intermingled with thirty-two small, white and ivory-looking substances” “scattered to and fro about the floor,” the psychological thread of the story remains as scattered and fragmented as the spilled contents. It is in the inscrutable machinations facilitated by a shape-shifting “monomania,” in other words, that Poe achieves his favorite effects.

In the first few decades of the nineteenth century, phobia’s accumulating satirical connotations had made anything remotely like this sincerity of terror an almost

impossible connotation—the one exception being the disease of hydrophobia itself.

Moreover, the pleasure of coining new phobias—a pleasure monomania avoided in its abstract generality—meant an indulgence in unfolding, in the manner of the literature on domiphobia or the story “Spheeksphobia,” all the amusing tendrils of association that might stem from an aversive intimacy. In *The Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva ventures a definition of phobia to which Poe might have found himself drawn by contrast.

Defining her influential concept of “abjection,” as the unintelligible horror of encountering one’s mortal corporeality, facilitated by a disintegration of the distinction between one’s subjectivity and an exterior “other,” Kristeva offers this provocation: “The phobic has no other object than the abject” (6). Through this formulation, Kristeva’s point is not to eclipse our investments in exterior objects—the classic examples in her theory of abjection being blood, vomit, excrement, and the like—but rather to suggest that a phenomenology of phobia must derive its power from something beyond the clean relation implied by phobia’s penchant for collecting interchangeable attachments. Poe’s interest in fear aimed for something comparable, and it is perhaps in this distinction that he offers a useful alternative, teetering on the edge of a phobic imagination that had begun to gather new momentum alongside his unfolding literary celebrity. In certain ways, Poe theorized phobia as a familiar and quotidian phenomenology far better than most of his contemporaries; yet, part of his success in this regard involved avoiding the – suffix as a means of denoting that very affective interest.

## CONCLUSION

In concluding this chapter, I want to return to Rush once more. Specifically, it is worth asking, before delving further into the origins of phobia’s international familiarity

as a tool of social satire in the late 1830s, what Rush intended in his 1786 taxonomy. In recent years, scholars have tended to read Rush's essay, alongside a companion piece he wrote titled "The Different Species of Mania," as instances of satire, rather than genuine psychological inquiry. In his groundbreaking work on early American magazine culture, for instance, Jared Gardner suggests that the essay on phobias is mostly "humorous and chiding." In a compelling analysis of Rush's medical and political thought, Sari Altschuler argues similarly that while Rush promoted ideals such as "circulation" and "sympathy" in his medical and political writings, he balanced these positive virtues with satirical interventions, an inclination we find evidenced in his essays on mania and phobia. Citing, in particular, his proposal of a condition called "Negro Mania," in which he presents a mocking indictment of proslavery logic, Altschuler demonstrates brilliantly that Rush reliably ascribed to the following aphorism: "Sentimentality taught readers to sympathize correctly; satire rent useful fissures" (230).

That satire played a part in the essays on phobia and mania is undeniable. Moreover, Gardner and Altschuler attend to the rhetorical effects of Rush's satirical tone in instructive ways. Nonetheless, to get at the nuances of what Rush intended with his essay on phobia, we must go back to the rest of his corpus and papers to look for clues. Lecture manuscripts from Rush's teaching career suggest not only that he kept the pieces on phobia and mania in mind, but also that the professor proceeded to pull from the two essays when delving into the field of study he famously referred to as "diseases of the mind"—almost verbatim in certain instances. Explaining in one lecture that "Every inordinate pursuit of pleasure" is a "species of madness," he offers a taxonomy of manias to illustrate what he means, with the vast majority coming from the earlier essay—among

them the monarchy mania, land mania, military mania, hunting mania, ecclesiastical mania, poetical mania, and mathematical mania, next to nine additional repeats. Rather than reading the original essays as either serious medical literature or mere satire, I suggest they are better interpreted as hybrid documents merging entertainment with novel speculation—an affective complexity discordant with modern sensibilities of disciplinary purity.

Amidst continuities between the pieces in *The Columbian* and Rush's lectures, the professor's return to diseases premised on fear offer, in contrast to the passages on mania, both a sequence of repetitions and a curious shift. While some of the original essay has been adapted, Rush drops the phobia suffix from his lecture almost entirely. This may have been because the suffix, relatively unexplored when he wrote the original essay, had in the years since begun to occupy a vague network of contradictory uses, including, in addition to medicine, diverse political and social satires. Thus, the only place Rush maintains the suffix is in describing what he had originally called "Water Phobia," used to designate a dread not of swallowing, but rather of crossing water by boat. As an example in both the lecture and *The Columbian*, Rush names Peter the Great, whose dread of crossing water was so intense he "commanded his servants to throw him into a boat when he had occasion to cross a river" (Lectures). Interestingly, Rush renames the condition in his lecture a variation of "hydrophobia," and even appears to have worried over its naming, writing first "fear," then striking it with a line, so that in the end it appears as: "A ~~fear~~ Hydrophobia, or dread of water." Thus, it becomes clear that Rush took the study of strong psychological attachments and aversions seriously. He went onto include a substantial section on fear in his *Diseases of the Mind*. In his surviving papers,

we find moreover an undated, carefully drawn chart corresponding to the evolving spectrum of fear taken up in his writings (Fig. 6). Showing the “Virtues and Vices” springing from “Fear,” the spectrum takes the form of an affect-based thermometer, proposing that while fear may produce virtues such as a “forgiveness of one’s enemies,” it can also slip into pathological aversions, the most logical of these being death and pain, while others descend by degrees into an ever-intensifying irrationalism, from calumny (-15) to thunder and lightning (-20), to ghosts (-25), and finally to darkness (-30). When we compare the spectrum with a companion graph on the “Virtues and Vices That Spring from Love,” we find, moreover, that Rush emphasizes there not any series of object cathexes, but rather qualitative shifts in feeling. Instead of choosing the wrong kind of object, as fear might, love devolves into jealousy, resentment, malice, and hatred, until, at -30 degrees, it ends in murder. Thus, we discover that even as Rush appears to have backed away from phobia as a variable suffix, he kept its central idea in play: the idea that pathologies of fear might reside, primarily, in isolated preoccupations, or the perversity of an object choice premised on aversion.

I should close with a word on method. Across the medical literature and fiction explored above, this chapter has endeavored to encounter the history of emotions as a history of forms. At the same time, my focus has been particular, invested more in elaborating the conditions for phobia’s emergence as an affective category in U.S. culture than in determining a singular way for the history of emotions to be done. However, the methods pursued in this analysis have also been shaped by a deliberate ethic—one of *defamiliarization*, devoted to discovering the contingencies, far removed from us presently, integral to prompting newfound consensus around the value of an emotion, at

the juncture of intellectual and cultural thresholds. This ethic of defamiliarization emphasizes the evolving forms taken by emotions over time without re-investing, conversely, in an oversimplified search for origins. Similar to Bruno Latour's approach to the nature of medical upheaval in *The Pasteurization of France* (another work interested partly in the influence of rabies on Western thought), I have aimed to avoid the trappings of medical hagiography, which would emphasize solitary genius at the expense of casting light on an array of strange, interrelated phenomena. Likewise, I have avoided treating phobia's emergence, as a recognizable affect and pathology, as anything like the grandiose triumph of a Kuhnian revolution in the history of scientific ideas.<sup>30</sup> Rather, I have pursued the curious pathways taken by spontaneity, as a category indicative of abnormal disease origin, as the term opened onto generative riddles of psychological possession. It is worth observing that within these enigmatic lacunae, opened up by inexplicable pathology, Rush assisted in establishing certain conventions for the expansion of a phobic sensibility, in the same decades that it started to become a recognizable social hermeneutic in U.S. culture. Nevertheless, hydrophobia, as a state of madness and threat disseminated in print, continued to elicit speculation and experimentation far beyond the control of any one figure. For decades, hydrophobia remained at the center of this burgeoning analytic, establishing an important template for the study of fear in its diseased state.

In reading medical literature for its genre properties, formed according to shared narrative conventions, we find in studying late eighteenth century disease classification that a perceived homology between communicated and idiopathic symptoms participated

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<sup>30</sup> See Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (U of Chicago P, 1962).



in producing a recognizable type of medical narrative. This narrative was characterized by a formal adherence to the plotline implicit in the logic of spontaneous pathology, which repeatedly molded the way case studies were framed and told. At the same time, we discover that spontaneity, as a generic register, opened up pathways of its own in a burgeoning literature on hypochondriasis and the potency of fear over human physiology. These interlinked phenomena in medical knowledge production speak to the importance of reading medical narratives as literature, available for close reading, interpretation, and critique. Yet they also remind us that diseases and affective states of the past found expression through volatile, shape-shifting signifiers, operating in systems of knowledge incommensurable with our own. To understand the phenomenology their nomenclature conjured, we are compelled to resuscitate and reencounter the networks of meaning in which they traveled and first acquired legibility.

## CHAPTER 2

### A METAPHOR DISTILLED: COLORPHOBIA'S SATIRICAL CASE FORM IN THE NEWSPAPERS OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS, CHARLES BENNETT RAY, LYDIA MARIA CHILD, AND WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON

Categories of analysis must look out for themselves, and I confess that I cannot arouse in myself a passionate interest in what happens to them. If not kept strictly in their place, they get above themselves and go masquerading as persons, mingling on equal terms with human beings and sometimes crowding them out altogether. When categories of analysis do that, they have forgotten their manners and need to be taken sharply in hand by their parents and reminded when it is appropriate and when inappropriate for children to be seen and heard.

Barbara Jeanne Fields, "Categories of Analysis? Not in My Book" (1989)

In the decades following Rush's essay in *The Columbian*, phobia's popularity as a suffix ripe for satire spread rapidly. National and religious phobias, especially, began to be coined on the fly across a range of publications, perspectives, and geographies. Nowhere, however, would this satirical trend succeed more than in the context of American abolitionism, where a concept known as "colorphobia" began to take off in the 1830s. An article published in 1838 by New Hampshire abolitionist Nathaniel Peabody Rogers offers an example of its emergent connotations. "Our people have got it," Rogers begins cryptically. "They have got it in the blue, collapse stage. Many of them have got it so bad, they can't get well. They will die of it. It will be a mercy if the nation does not" (1). Defined as a pathological aversion to skin tone—or in Rogers' words "hate of complexion"—the malady known as *colorphobia* conjured a vicious antagonist. "This color-phobia [sic] is making terrible havoc among our communities," Rogers goes on. "It

is meaner in fact than the itch. It is worse to get rid of than the ‘seven years itch’ [scabies]. It is fouler than Old Testament leprosy.” Used in most accounts to designate a fear of blackness specifically, to the extent that the term became interchangeable with *Negrophobia*, colorphobia identified a psychological state integral to slavery’s survival. Rogers thus concludes by insisting on the urgency of its threat: “Time would fail us to tell of its extent and depth in this free country, or the deeds it has done. Anti-slavery must cure it, or it must die out like the incurable drunkards.”

This chapter traces the rise of colorphobia and Negrophobia as categories of analysis in the antebellum period, with an eye on their contribution to a deeper genealogy. The terms were the first major concepts to adopt *-phobia* as a suffix for sociopolitical purposes. Since their emergence, some two hundred years ago, this use of phobia has proliferated, bringing terms such as homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, and Islamophobia into global circulation.<sup>31</sup> Phobia’s political uses have also been important to prominent critical theorists. In the context of contemporary critical race theory, for instance, Negrophobia will likely call to mind the work of Frantz Fanon who describes the condition in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) as foundational to a collective white unconscious: an “affect” with “a priority that defies all rational thinking” (120). For abolitionists, the turn to racial phobia marked the inception of a highly experimental hermeneutic, which conceptualized racial inequality as a phenomenon originating in

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<sup>31</sup> To describe phobia’s cultural value, I follow David Trotter’s idea that, as a concept, phobia comprises an array of different “uses” in language. By this, Trotter means to suggest that phobia has been impactful not merely as a pathological state, but also as a “versatile moral, political, and aesthetic resource” (1). See Trotter’s book *The Uses of Phobia*, which explores variations on phobia from George Eliot and Ford Maddox Ford through film directors such as Alfred Hitchcock and Pedro Almodóvar.

phobic encounters with blackness.<sup>32</sup> To recreate a sense of what racial phobia signified in this context, this chapter explores how the concept began trending across an array of newspapers, including Frederick Douglass's *North Star*, Samuel Cornish and Charles Bennett Ray's *The Colored American*, William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator*, the *Anti-Slavery Standard* edited by David and Lydia Maria Child, and a host of others. In tracking this circulation, I show how allusions to racial phobia became pervasive in the antebellum period, appearing in hundreds of antislavery editorials published in the U.S. and greater Atlantic world in the years leading up to and during the Civil War.<sup>33</sup>

I devote the first part of this chapter to three provocations regarding antislavery affect. The first and most basic claim I will make is that abolitionists cultivated, in their collective recognition of a phobic sensibility in American politics, an inverse sentiment—a kind of *anti-phobia*, characterized by an aversion to phobia itself. By this I mean that abolitionist texts set the terms for an affective dialectic, within which antislavery became defined partly by its position against phobia's debilitating social and national effects. I begin with this argument, in part, to emphasize that while abolitionism comprised an

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<sup>32</sup> Colorphobia, as a concept, tended to be interchangeable with Negrophobia. I have only been able to locate a few articles in which colorphobia was used explicitly in a broader capacity. One article, published in *The Philanthropist* in 1843, describes a situation in which a Hawaiian Chief, accredited as an ambassador from “the Sandwich islands” during the Tyler presidency, was prohibited from breakfasting with white passengers aboard a steamer from New York to New Haven. As a result, both the ambassador and a Reverend Richards accompanying him “took breakfast with the blacks and other servants of the boat” (2). Describing the captain and clerk responsible for the embarrassment, the author writes, “They are your true, democratic colorphobiacs. What care they for rank? That does not change a man's *color*.”

<sup>33</sup> An editorial I wrote for *The New Republic* briefly contextualizes contemporary phobias in this earlier moment. (See “The Anti-Slavery Roots of Today's Phobia Obsession,” published January 29, 2016.) The editorial responds to a piece published in *The New York Times* earlier that month, which traces our present “—phobia' boom” to the coinage of “homophobia” among gay liberation activists in the 1960s and 1970s.

array of perspectives on racial difference, articles invoking colorphobia and Negrophobia gestured to possibilities of *affective* consensus, accentuating a common antagonism toward phobia as a flawed, yet ubiquitous social disposition. The rapid proliferation of this rhetoric, I argue, makes antiphobic sentiment an illustrative example of what Raymond Williams famously called “structures of feeling,” used to describe the potential for political communities to generate and experiment with new emotive modes.

At the same time, understanding this shared aversion to phobia requires that we explore how and why it caught on in the antebellum period specifically. As a second point I argue that the rise of colorphobia as a concept marks a strange, yet important moment in the history of psychiatry, as the discipline began to consolidate and form an independent branch within the history of medicine. Far from building on any well-established tradition in progressive lexicons, the rhetoric of racial phobia originated in a speculative etymological genealogy. As with Rush’s phobia taxonomy, colorphobia was first conceptualized in dialogue with medical discourse as a state of feeling analogous to hydrophobia. Playing on the dread of water associated with rabies, colorphobia first began to be tested in elaborate satirical editorials as a clever pun on hydrophobia, used to picture the slave system as a vicious beast holding the nation captive in its salivating jaws. An article appearing in *The Colored American* put the comparison plainly in 1839: “The word is first cousin to hydrophobia and so is the thing. It is a terrible insanity produced by the bite of slavery.”

Infused with these medical valences, diagnoses of colorphobia and Negrophobia established a powerful counterpoint to the evolving discourse of scientific racism. As Katherine Bankole-Medina’s *Slavery and Medicine* (1998) and Marli Weiner and Mazie

Hough's *Sex, Sickness, and Slavery* (2012) have shown, proslavery physicians soon deployed proto-psychiatric terms of their own, to classify persons of African descent as prone to unique mental illnesses.<sup>34</sup> Accounts of colorphobia and Negrophobia had the collective effect of focusing a clinical nomenclature, instead, on the prejudice of white Americans. Despite this significance, for my third point I contend that even as colorphobia contributed to a growing discourse around possible psychiatric maladies its relation to mental illness grew increasingly complex. At times, the diagnosis of phobia was meant literally, with reference to genuine pathology. In other instances, phobia was invoked more as a figure of speech, through which race prejudice was portrayed as analogous to disease rather than pathological in the strong sense. Then, as colorphobia and Negrophobia began to gain traction on a transatlantic scale, they began to be used by a number of writers with clearer reference to moral rather than psychical defect. In these uses, appearing several decades before "racism" was coined, the terms became effectively synonymous with race prejudice, wherein the stakes of the contagion metaphor had less to do with madness than with a generalized sense of social injustice, spread within and beyond the slave system. Rather than treating these competing valences as divisible from one another, I contend that they coalesced in a dynamic

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<sup>34</sup> Among the most widely cited examples of proslavery psychology is Samuel Cartwright's "Diseases and Peculiarities of the Negro Race," published in 1851. A former student of Rush's at the University of Pennsylvania (who rejected his professor's antislavery allegiances), Cartwright claimed to have discovered a condition called "drapetomania," a "disease causing negroes to run away." Describing the nature of the disease, Cartwright wrote, "In noticing a disease not heretofore classed among the long list of maladies that man is subject to, it was necessary to have a new term to express it. The cause, in the most of cases, that induces the negro to runaway from service, is as much a disease of the mind as any other species of mental alienation." A figure addressed at length in Bankole-Medina's scholarship, Cartwright also provides the inspiration for a Natasha Trethewey poem, titled "Dr. Samuel Adolphus Cartwright on Dissecting the White Negro, 1851."

assemblage, and are best interpreted together as lay experimentations with the cultural capital and vernacular adaptability of medical nomenclature.

In the context of this dynamism, a subtle trajectory may nevertheless be traced as to colorphobia and Negrophobia's evolving philological dimensions between the 1830s and 1860s. Specifically, I propose that while the hydrophobia analogy remained central to the terms' rhetorical purchase up through the end of the Civil War, a competing usage became increasingly common: the terms' consolidation into place-holding euphemisms for race prejudice broadly conceived, signposted in antislavery editorials with little elaboration, for the sake of expediency. To demonstrate the effects of this gradual etymological shift, I turn toward the end of this chapter to examples including an editorial titled "Humbug Sublimated," published in Horace Greeley's *New-York Daily Tribune*, as well as a commemorative speech on the anniversary of the Boston Massacre by the African American Reverend Charles Lennox Remond. Following my analysis of these writings, with the goal of further exploring the rhetorical work of euphemisms and epithets as philological strategies in antislavery and proslavery debates, I conclude by turning briefly to a related term that acquired some popularity contemporaneous with colorphobia's ascendancy: a feeling antebellum writers conceived of as colorphobia's other, known as *negrophilia*, used most often in the Americas as a kind of stigmatizing epithet. Referred to in Anglophone antebellum writing as *negrophilism*, by Hispanophone writers as *negrófilo*, and in Francophone texts as *négrophilie*, this index of an expressly political interracial love—used to suggest a preference, implicitly erotic, among white persons for blackness or people of African descent—became an occasion for practicing the use value of epithetical speech acts in discourse around race prejudice on a

transhemispheric scale. Covering a spectrum of negrophilia's uses, from Jane Cazneau's *Eagle Pass, Or Life on the Border* and Andrés Avelino de Orihuela's Spanish translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal*, I suggest that such texts allow us to pass through a kind of affective looking glass, to consider the evolving philological relations between epithets, euphemisms, and racial politics in the antebellum period, as performed against and in tension with colorphobia's generative wordplay.

### **THE ANTI-PHOBIC SENTIMENT IN ANTISLAVERY PRINT CULTURE**

The earliest recorded utterance of either term in the U.S. appears to be the partial transcript of a congressional debate, which has since been referred to as the prelude to the Missouri Compromise, held February 17-19, 1819 (Johnson 47). During the debate, Kentucky Speaker of the House Henry Clay used the term Negrophobia first, accusing Northern Representatives of fighting the expansion of slavery with ulterior motives. According to Clay, the real reason Northern congressmen wanted slavery confined to the South was that they feared the migration of Africans westward or northward. While Clay's speech appears paraphrased rather than transcribed, the original reply given by New York Representative John Taylor survives. "The gentleman from Kentucky...has charged us...with being under the influence of negrophobia," Taylor replied. "Sir, he mistook his mark. I thank God that the disease mentioned by that gentleman is unknown to my constituents" (1223). Taylor continued by arguing that the disease was, instead, endemic to the South. "[T]he negrophobia does unhappily prevail in another section of this country...it haunts its subjects in their dreams, and disturbs their waking hours" (1223-4). Re-appropriating the term as an apt diagnosis of proslavery politics, Taylor



experimented with a rhetorical strategy that would begin to catch on widely in abolitionist print venues some fifteen years later.

In order to determine what colorphobia and Negrophobia signified during this period, we first have to account for the rhetorical wordplay the *-phobia* suffix sparked as a loose but swiftly evolving structure of feeling. As noted elsewhere in this project, phobia's nascent connotative dimensions in the Atlantic world depended heavily on a satirical trend rooted in the hydrophobia analogy. Brief reference to a specimen of British satire, published just before the rhetoric of colorphobia began to take off in antislavery newspapers, shows how the analogy was being appropriated in other circles. In 1834, piqued by growing tensions between English Bishops and their constituents over the act of tithing—a conflict with echoes in the Tithe War then sweeping Ireland—the comic newspaper *Figaro in London* published an article titled “Church Reformophobia.” The piece opens with an illustration, showing one dog with a human head, allegedly from Ireland, biting a bulldog used to represent English unrest (Fig. 7). Both dogs bark: “No Tithes!” (5). Behind them, three crudely drawn Bishops wring their hands and cry, “Mad Dogs! Mad Dogs!” Underneath, the article proceeds by explaining, “A new malady has lately sprung up among the Bishops, always full enough of ill, to which we shall give the name of *Church-Reformophobia*” (5). The author continues,

This disease is characterised by the most alarming symptoms of rabid fury, and is always accompanied by a strong discharge of froth of a venomous quality from the mouth of the unhappy animal who chances to be suffering under the dreadful calamity. (5)

In the illustration, the disease is portrayed as pervading both sides, with those opposing the tithe pinpointed as the dogs responsible for the contagion. Ultimately, however, the author places greatest blame with the Bishops themselves. Having “rushed in a state of fury among the people, biting all they can,” the Bishops have betrayed the reason underlying their resistance to “Church Reform”—a concept identified as “the point so much dreaded by those who have long flourished on the abuses of the unreformed system.” The implication seems to be that it is only from the perspective of the Bishops themselves that protest against tithes is perceived as a cry among mad dogs. To see the world through the Bishops’ eyes is not merely to feel the affliction of phobia, that is; it requires that one read political unrest etiologically, as spreading social turmoil in the manner of rabid dogs spreading a disease.

I elaborate this example at length because it offers a sense of the satirical tradition abolitionists would soon capitalize upon themselves. Clearly enough, “Church Reformophobia” revels in a murky, absurdist metaphorical frame, oriented around canine rabidity, for both its satirical and metaphorical payoff. This punning sensibility of phobia became commonplace in the early nineteenth century. When the rhetoric of racial phobia began to take root in antislavery print culture, it likewise took shape in dialogue with a medical discourse where hydrophobia served as a direct antecedent. An article titled “A New Kind of Phobia,” published in 1846, charts the genealogy at length. Accounting for a strain of proslavery rhetoric in which abolition was expected to unleash a “black deluge,” where former slaves would “squat among us, swear against us, crowd our children out of the schools, vote against us,” the writer of the article maintains that within these sentiments lie “symptoms of a malady deep-rooted, inveterate, and apt to prove

fatal to the moral man—a disease not mentioned by Doctors, though requiring treatment, of the most skillful and vigorous character—we mean *negrophobia*” (2). The author directs focus, in following, to where “symptoms” of Negrophobia and “those of hydrophobia” overlap:

The victim of the latter cannot bear *water*. The sight of it inspires him with dread—makes him foam at the mouth—throws him sometimes into convulsions. The victim of the former cannot bear a *dark complexion*. He starts back from it with horror—it haunts him day and night—all his thoughts assume a somber aspect—and two or three dark faces together throws [sic] him into alarming spasms. (2)

Aside from illustrating phobia’s metaphorical underpinnings, the article captures the complex and contradictory tones phobia comprised early on. Clearly, the author borrows the rabies metaphor, in part, because of its biting, satirical payoff. At the same time, the diagnostic rhetoric alters the metaphor’s stakes, laying claim to a sharp distinction between what Georges Canguilhem famously termed the *normal* and the *pathological*. In a puzzling caveat, the author proceeds to claim that Negrophobia’s portrayal as a kind of mental disease is meant with some sincerity. “We beg leave to be understood,” he writes, “neither in a Personal, nor Pickwickian, but in a Scientific sense.” Whether readers are meant to perceive the distinction as tongue-in-cheek or vaguely genuine is hard to parse. Nonetheless, the author takes care to protect the seriousness of his tone. At the conclusion, a final comparison is made: “Another feature they have in common. Both are apt to bite and tear their species, being filled with a most unnatural hate against them.”

As the popularity of the terms grew, analyses of colorphobia asserted proximity to disease classification most consistently by adopting the language and mode of presentation used in reports of hydrophobia. Articles on hydrophobia frequently revolved around spectacular case studies, appropriating anecdotal accounts to supplement or challenge existing knowledge. Titles for such reports could read “Dreadful Case of the Hydrophobia,” “Remarkable Case of Hydrophobia,” “Case of Hydrophobia,” or simply “Hydrophobia.”<sup>35</sup> Antislavery periodicals adopted the same convention. In 1839, to give an example, *The Liberator* published an essay titled “A Dreadful Case of Color-Phobia.” The following week, the journal published an article titled “Another Case of Color-Phobia.” Sometimes these cases gestured broadly to situations rather than people; often, however, they specified individual sufferers. An article published in Frederick Douglass’s *The North Star* in 1849, written by Douglass’s printer John Dick, tells, for instance, of a newspaper editor from Westfield, Massachusetts, believed to be a “decided ‘case,’” stricken with “the malignant and dangerous malady known as colorphobia.” “The approach of a decidedly black man,” the article explains, “aroused him to a perfect paroxysm of terror,” out of which “friends” could never “reason” him. We should be careful not to miss the mocking tone of the article. And yet, Dick sustains a clinical epistemology throughout. Holding on to colorphobia as an apt “diagnosis” of the editor’s

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<sup>35</sup> See, for respective examples, *The Rural Magazine; or, Vermont Repository* 1.1 (1795): 26; *Zion’s Herald* 6.52 (1835): 206; *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* 26.17 (Jun 1842): 264; and *Boston Recorder* 2.15 (Apr 8, 1817): 59.

mental state, Dick warns: “In almost every town and city of the Union may be found many just such cases.”<sup>36</sup>

How, then, should we understand colorphobia’s early proximity to medical science? Evidently enough, abolitionists were interested in repurposing the epistemology of the medical case study. Gianna Pomata has argued for reading the case form as a type of *epistemic genre*. By “epistemic” Pomata means “those kinds of texts that develop in tandem with scientific practices,” such as “the treatise, the commentary, the textbook, the encyclopedia, but also the aphorism, the dialogue, the essay, the medical recipe, [and] case history”—in essence, texts that take as their purview “the practice of knowledge-making” (2). While acknowledging that the value of case narratives change over time, Pomata contends that the case’s participation in knowledge production consistently relies on its ability to convey “a gloss that connects the canonical rule to a specific context, relating a medical (or moral and legal) principle to the *hic et nunc*, the here and now, of specific circumstances” (6). This does not mean all cases operate by conveying a stable, corroborative relationship with existing knowledge. Rather, as Monika Class has observed, case narratives generally fall somewhere in the vicinity of three “interrelated functions”: sometimes to organize empirical information in “preparation” for a not yet established “scientific model”; at other times, to fortify presumed relationships between “the particular and the universal”; and still in other contexts to introduce a disruptive anomaly, in contradistinction to preexisting knowledge about a disease and its alleged parameters. And yet, useful as it is to delineate these genre properties, documented cases

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<sup>36</sup> For other articles treating phobia in these terms, see: “A Marked Case of Negrophobia.” *The Liberator* 33.10 (Mar. 6, 1863): 38; and “An Alarming Case of Negrophobia.” *The Anti-Slavery Bugle* 14.34 (Apr. 9, 1859): 1.

of colorphobia took these connotations down deviant pathways. On the one hand, like standard case studies, they gestured to a reciprocity in knowledge, by which the phenomenology of a singular subject or incident was used to enhance awareness of a systemic crisis. However, the popularity of the rhetoric had equally to do with the fact that here a hybrid, highly experimental genre was being tested—a satirical case form, which defiantly fused the best of both worlds: the special sovereignty of a medical gaze with the unbridled play of parody and metaphor.

To be sure, ambiguities followed from this formal hybridity, yet these ambiguities tended to be generative rather than restrictive. One of the most important dimensions of colorphobia's diagnostic metaphor was its capacity to account for the social communicability of race prejudice. Without a doubt, abolitionists wanted to investigate the means by which the transmission of proslavery was happening psychologically. Observing reports that Canada was becoming unfriendly to slaves who had escaped and fled north, one 1853 article published in *The African Repository* asserts with palpable shame, "Canadians have caught from us the contagion of negro-phobia" (79). An 1860 article titled "Negrophobia Breaking Out in Ohio" conceptualizes the problem of affective contagion similarly. Yet, this rhetoric also buttressed phobia's figurative dimension. Indeed, the matter of communicability reinforced the analogy to hydrophobia, specifically, in that it represented in a period prior to the rise of microbiology one of a few self-evidently transmittable diseases—the attack of a rabid animal being spectacular enough to make contagion obvious. One lively writer for Vermont's *The Voice of Freedom* thus identifies "the United States" as the great "mad dog" at the root of the disease, maintaining that the species "is peculiar to the land of liberty—where they all get

bit by him, and the phobiatic is indelible,” no more able to bear the sight of black persons than “a poor dog in the last stages of the *rabies canis* could bear the sound of Niagara falls” (4). A range of texts tap into phobia’s allegory in this way. Another curious instance shows up on an envelope hailing from New York, circulating sometime between 1861 and 1865, featuring an illustration of Jefferson Davis as a “Mad Dog!,” terrorizing the nation with his rabid secessionism (Fig. 8). In such iterations, the generic conventions Pomata describes as epistemic, used to assert a reciprocity in knowledge between disease description and its materialization in citizens, opened equally onto allegorical terrain. For the Vermont author quoted above and the New York envelope alike, it is precisely the distance of the rabid dog as a representative figure (its utter disconnect from the intended referent, to invoke Paul de Man’s definition of allegory) that gives the comparison its playful rhetorical purchase.

This wordplay and formal hybridity enhanced what we might call colorphobia’s didactic, galvanizing function. The satirical case form functioned equally, for many abolitionists, as a kind of diagnostic parable, by which reference to a familiar metaphor (i.e. contagious disease) helped provide readers with a critical lens with which to interpret and navigate the public sphere. A piece Douglass wrote for *The North Star* in 1849 titled “Colorphobia in New York!” offers one of the period’s most virtuosic experiments in these terms. The article attempts to recapture the reactions of New Yorkers upon seeing, as Wilson J. Moses writes of the incident, Douglass “parade[] down Broadway” accompanied by two white Englishwomen, Julia and Eliza Griffiths, “one on each arm” (50). The verbal and physical harassment the trio received later inspired Douglass to don the rhetoric of racial phobia at length. “The fifth of May will long be remembered as the

most trying day ever experienced by the unfortunate victims of colophobia,” Douglass begins. The article then proceeds by emphasizing the ubiquity of the insanity he witnessed:

The disease was never more malignant or general than on that day. The streets were literally crowded with persons of all classes afflicted with this terrible malady. Whole omnibus loads were attacked at the same moment, and their hideous and unearthly howls were truly distressing, excruciating. It will be impossible to describe, or give the reader any correct idea either of the extent of the disease or the agony it seemed to occasion. Like most epidemics, its chief havoc was among the baser sort. The suffering here was fearful and intense. If the genteel suffered from the plague, they managed to suppress and control their feelings better than what are called the ‘lower orders.’ But, even here, there could be no successful concealment. The strange plague defied all concealment, and would show itself in spite of veils, white pocket handkerchiefs, parasols, hats, bonnets and umbrellas. (141)

Narrating what amounts to a complete breakdown between public behavior and private prejudice, across a dystopian New York landscape, Douglass invokes colorphobia as a plague no civilizing convention can keep contained. Objects of social etiquette—veils, handkerchiefs, parasols, hats, bonnets, and umbrellas—appear as flimsy shields, no longer capable of offering the pathology of white prejudice any privilege of discretion. At the same time, the centrality of Douglass’ perspective, not merely as diagnostician but as the subject of the colorphobia, radically mutates the formal conventions of the case study.



Instead of picturing a singular case of the disease under scrutiny, Douglass speaks from the positionality of what Fanon would later describe as a “phobogenic” referent: a “stimulus to anxiety,” reflecting onto white supremacy a constitutive “phobia”—a “latent” “affect” underlying its cohesion (117, 120). In speaking from this perspective, Douglass subjects onlookers to a progressive nomenclature in the making. At the same time, as authoritative witness, he also gives himself room to break with the diagnostic rhetoric, as soon as its usefulness expires. Toward the conclusion, his tone alters: “We, however, tire of this subject. This prejudice is so unjust, unnatural and irrational, that ridicule and indignation seem to be the only weapons with which to assail it” (142-3). Abruptly the narrative shifts from a prior metaphorical playfulness to plain-speaking critique.

For Douglass, the value of the analogy to rabies endured only as long as one could sustain its satirical bite. In other instances, however, there existed one other vital advantage to phobia’s play with medical formalism: the idea that ending slavery might be conceptualized in terms of cure. No piece demonstrates this facet of an antiphobic imagination better than Nathaniel Peabody Rogers’ article “Color-Phobia.” While Rogers begins by describing colorphobia as a deadly malady, he quickly turns to matter of transmission and remedy. Elaborating on the state of the afflicted, Rogers writes, “They don’t know that they have got it....But they were inoculated. It was injected into their veins and *incided* into their systems, by old doctor Slavery” (1). Turning afterward to matters of prescription, he continues, “The remedy and the preventive, if taken early, is a kine pock sort of matter, by the name of *anti-slavery*. It is a safe preventive, and a certain cure. None that *have it, genuine*, ever catch slavery...or the color-phobia.” With these

lines, the article seems to shift from a rhetorical mode approximating diagnosis to pure metaphorical abstraction. Personifying Slavery, Rogers allegorizes colorphobia's contraction in terms of bad medicine—Slavery operating like a maniacal doctor on the American body politic, injecting it with foreign substances that will eventually destroy it. Yet more is going on here than may at first be apparent. When Rogers states that only the “antidote” of “antislavery” can cure colorphobia's ailment, he cites William Lloyd Garrison's the *Liberator* as a curative agent in particular. Looking to this clue, I would argue that Rogers here envisions antislavery print culture itself as a material therapy capable of counseling the nation to better health. While the “antidote” of “antislavery” may seem like a vague prescription, Rogers' article actually parallels a shift in the formal organization of the *Liberator* itself, which occurred just prior to the article's publication. A common front-page header, titled “SLAVERY,” generally following an opening section titled “REFUGE OF OPPRESSION,” was amended to “ANTI-SLAVERY” for the first time on June 1, 1838. The switch to “ANTI-SLAVERY” stuck thereafter. Rogers appears to have sensed in this rhetorical shift a prescriptive element, thus prompting his emphasis on the logic of a material textuality as cure.

Even as figurative and diagnostic meditations of these sorts became commonplace, the link to rabies also grew more obscure in certain contexts. Increasingly, colorphobia and Negrophobia appear to have been conceptualized in moral terms as sins of the heart and mind. As the terms began to be deployed in this moral register, their ambiguities intensified: whether they kept or discarded their diagnostic or metaphorical connotations was left largely to the inclinations of readers. Nevertheless, the increasing use of colorphobia and Negrophobia in this fashion gives us added insight into the terms'

lexical parameters. Most importantly, they show us that even as the terms invited play (metaphorical and satirical), they could also be used with unmitigated gravity. That is, while in many instances we should be careful not to miss phobia's joke (which is to say, the implicit provocation: *what are you, phobic?*), in other instances we should avoid reading a sense of humor where it is absent. One of the best examples of this usage is William Lloyd Garrison's seminal essay "American Colorphobia," published in the *Liberator* in 1847, which uses the term to distinguish theologies compatible with antislavery principles from proslavery's manipulations of Biblical scripture. However, an even more remarkable example may be found in a sermon titled "Negrophobia" written by Tayler Lewis, a professor of "Oriental languages and literature" at Union College, in Schenectady, New York. Published in 1862, the piece makes the bold argument that when speaking of "negrophobia, negro-contempt, or, in other words, that contempt for a portion of our humanity, which is now becoming so rife among us," "We say it is a worse thing than slavery" (6). The reason, Lewis asserts, is that Negrophobia describes a kind of malevolence without purpose. "[O]dious and deformed as the servile institution is," he explains,

there is now growing up in our midst something far more vile, far more insulting to humanity, far more offensive to God....It cannot shelter itself under the ethics, low and vile as it may be, of an utilitarian political economy....It cannot plead cotton; it has no inducement of interest, no temptation in the *sense*. It is a *soul-sin*, such as devils may commit, who have no earthly, sensual interests. It is pure, naked, disembodied, evil. (6)

While slavery might hide, “however falsely,” behind motives of general benevolence, Negrophobia cannot. The latter represents a purity of violence, conspicuously inhumane in its lack of purpose. Before concluding, Lewis goes so far as to call it a veritable “antichrist.” An unequivocally somber meditation, Lewis’s rendition of Negrophobia as sin demonstrates that even as Negrophobia’s figurative and diagnostic implications persisted, the terms became popular enough to enter the terrain of larger theological debates in which antislavery was being grounded and theorized.

### **TOWARDS A EUPHEMISTIC EXPEDIENCY**

As noted above, Lewis’s “Negrophobia” sermon shows us an instance of the term eschewing its otherwise diagnostic, satirical, and metaphorical valences. At the same time, while the piece well exemplifies racial phobia’s capacity to transcend these familiar implications, Lewis finds it necessary to elaborate Negrophobia’s meaning at length. Across the 1850s and 1860s, still other writers began making reference to colorphobia and Negrophobia in an almost offhand manner, using the terms essentially as shorthand for race prejudice, without feeling the need to spell out the stakes of their usage. Through this shift, colorphobia and Negrophobia began to play an important role in building up a transnational, antiracist lexicon. Emerging in print more than one-hundred years before the term “racism” (1932), and more than fifty years before the earlier “racialism” (1871), the terms have the distinction of being two of the earliest Anglophone neologisms of their kind: concepts used to address race prejudice as a precise form of bigotry, identifiable across multiple persons and contexts.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, this significance attests further

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<sup>37</sup> “Caste,” it is important to note, emerged in the English language long before Negrophobia. As Ania Loomba has noted, it is common for scholars to ignore the

to the terms' ever-fluctuating dynamism as speech acts. Part of understanding their evolving value to the antislavery cause requires that we attend to this subsequent development, in which their satirical content, the *raison-d'être* inhering in their punning sensibility, began to distill into a euphemistic expediency.

One of the first signs that the rhetoric of colorphobia was beginning to facilitate a new expediency in antislavery rhetoric was that abolitionists began to document its instances numerically. As noted in the previous section, this first took shape as an accumulation of "cases." Yet in terms of scale, racial phobia quickly began to accommodate a diverse array of metrics. An article published in the *New-York Tribune* in 1858, titled "Atlas Cushing," offers one instructive example. The article adopts the charge of Negrophobia to hold another journal, the *Boston Courier*, accountable for its uncritical support of House Representative Caleb Cushing, a famous opponent of abolitionism. In a detailed analysis of a *Courier* issue published on February 13 of that year, the author calls attention to "163" lines devoted to the "Defence of Mr. Cushing's Negrophobia." Locating this Negrophobia in Cushing's refusal to "recognize[e] any, save white men, as human beings," the author treats the article as a record of offenses, stressing not so much the congressman's mental impairments, but rather his humanitarian failings in the form of a running tally (1). The added implication is that the *Courier* has

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importance of such terms in forming a European racial imaginary, the argument being that race, in its modern form, comes into being in the "crucible of Atlantic slavery" (502). Loomba calls this an "Atlantic exceptionalism" by which "precolonial and non-European ways of thinking" are excluded from the way we understand race in its modern formations (Loomba 503). "Caste," the primary case of exclusion to which Loomba turns, which depended heavily on British contact with and perceptions of hierarchies in India, could be said to precede Negrophobia as a term indicative of race prejudice. I maintain, nevertheless, that Negrophobia is unique in the way it articulates race prejudice as a condition of subjectivity.

not just become complicit in Cushing's Negrophobia, but has begun to serve a kind of multiplicative function in its dissemination of partisan misinformation ("Atlas Cushing" 1).

Comparable examples of this accumulative function pervade antebellum and Civil War-era writings documenting racial phobia. Still, we should be careful not to assume that such moments equate automatically to an erasure of the hydrophobia metaphor. To give a contrary example, a piece published in Maria Weston Chapman's famously cosmopolitan annual *The Liberty Bell, by Friends of Freedom* in 1848 likewise treats the problem of racial phobia statistically, yet the effect is notably different from "Atlas Cushing." Written by Polish contributor Alexander Holinski, the essay, titled "Abolitionism in America," observes that "out of eighteen hundred and odd newspapers which appear in the United States, there are about fifty only that are free from Negrophobia," a "peculiar malady, the frightful intensity of which it is difficult for Europeans to imagine" (Holinski 266). Like the "Atlas Cushing" article, Holinski enumerates Negrophobia, yet without neglecting the analogy to rabies. By treating periodicals as case studies, Holinski takes the American press as an index of phobia's unrelenting contagion. Once again, this discrepancy reminds us that parsing colorphobia's ambiguities became the responsibility, largely, of antislavery readerships, whose divergent characteristics (class, education, geography, politics, etc.) played a role in shaping their encounter with a trend just beginning to cohere. Even so, distinctions may be drawn to determine phobia's changing rhetorical landscape. Specifically, I want to suggest, by way of this comparison between Chapman's *Liberty Bell* and the *New-York Tribune* article, that one of the starkest discrepancies, emerging largely in the 1850s and

1860s, occurred as the *allusive scaffolding*, by which colorphobia had first become a popular concept, began to drop out as a prerequisite of the term's application.

This absented scaffolding becomes apparent across an array of antislavery writings, some flimsy and unmemorable, others impressively argued and well-constructed. For our purposes here, we may be best off considering pieces otherwise remarkable, yet which make reference to the discourse of racial phobia only casually, in passing. Consider a piece titled "Humbug Sublimated," published in the *New-York Daily Tribune*.<sup>38</sup> Printed August 9, 1860, "Humbug Sublimated" explores the fallout following a rather infamous event in which Martin Delany, father of Black Nationalism, and Pennsylvania delegate George M. Dallas attended an International Statistical Congress meeting in London to which they had been separately invited. Upon seeing Delany and Dallas together at the meeting, Britain's Lord Chancellor Henry Brougham is said to have made some passing remark out loud, regarding American race prejudice, to note publicly that no ill was coming of Dallas being in Delany's vicinity. The story goes that Dallas stormed out of the meeting, and his embarrassment drew immediate transatlantic attention.

Responding to the event and to the attempts of other American publications to defend Dallas's actions, the author of "Humbug Sublimated" mounts an elaborate critique, taking the article as an opportunity to explore why Lord Brougham made the comment to begin with. "Let us consider the foregoing in the light of a few undeniable facts," the author writes. From there, the article launches into a catalogue of the U.S.

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<sup>38</sup> For other articles using Negrophobia or color-phobia in *The New York Tribune* during this period see, for example, "First of August in Lynn" (Aug. 12, 1846); "The Indiana State Convention—Negro-Phobia" (Jan. 30, 1851); "Country and City Politics" (Dec. 5, 1855); and "Colored Regiments in New York" (Oct. 21, 1863).

government's most egregious racially inflected relations. Organized by Roman numerals, I-V, the article lists everything from the refusal to recognize Haiti and Liberia as independent powers to the denial of passports to free African Americans, concluding each item with the repeat refrain: "—because they are negroes."<sup>39</sup> With these instances enumerated, the author comes to the conclusion that the Englishman's joke was hardly unwarranted. Here, in reaching its conclusion, the article at last slips in reference to Negrophobia:

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<sup>39</sup> To enumerate American foreign policy offences, "Humbug Sublimated" takes the structure of a pseudo-poetic epistrophe. Numbering I-V, the list reads:

I. The Republic of Hayti is treated by every European State—even France, from whom she wrested her independence in fair fight—as an equal and independent power, whose good will she desires to conciliate and preserve, whose trade she seeks to secure. This country alone refuses to acknowledge the existence of and maintain diplomatic relations with our sister republic—the oldest, next to our own, in America—simply because her people are negroes.

II. The Republic of Liberia was founded and is to-day mainly peopled and wholly governed by natives of an emigrants from this country. Its trade, like that of Hayti, is already valuable and steadily increasing; but it is compelled to desert our ports and those of Great Britain by the refusal of our Executive to acknowledge its independence and maintain diplomatic relations with its Government, because its people are negroes.

III. Natives and Lifelong residents of our country who have education, culture, character, probity, fortune, and social consideration in other lands, ask our Government to give them passports enabling them to travel in foreign climes, and are flatly refused—because they are negroes.

IV. They take passage in British steamships to cross the Atlantic, and are denied the common privileges of decently behaving human beings for which they have contracted and paid—not that the owners or managers of those vessels choose to make this odious and unjust discrimination—not that their British or other European passengers insist on it—but simply that the *American* passengers will have it—because these proscribed fellow-passengers are negroes.

V. Everywhere it is insisted that negroes—no matter how educated, how intellectual, how distinguished for moral worth and good works—must be proscribed and hunted from all association on terms of equality with White Americans—because they are negroes.



Lord Brougham, seeing these two representatives in juxtaposition, and believing, with most enlightened Europeans, that our national negrophobia is a compound of prejudice and hypocrisy begotten by Slavery, could not resist the temptation to call Mr. Dallas's attention to the fact that one of his fellow members was a negro. The allusion was of course jocular, and, if it stung, Slavery and American humbug, not Lord Brougham, gave it all its point. (4)

While on the one hand "Humbug Sublimated" funnels the listed offenses into the dilemma of what he calls a "national negrophobia," in order to paint Lord Brougham's passing remark as humiliatingly appropriate, the concept of "national negrophobia" itself turns out to need no introduction. In stark contrast to other articles explored above, which revolve around the extravagant elaboration of a novel pun, here the lexical parameters of the allusion have shifted considerably. What once gathered traction as a pun here becomes shorthand for racial intolerance writ large.

An 1858 speech delivered by Reverend Charles Lennox Remond at Faneuil Hall, as part of a festival commemorating the 88<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Boston Massacre, shows us a comparable usage.<sup>40</sup> Once again, to give the full effect of Remond's rhetoric, it is useful to have a sense of the speech as a whole. While the event heard from a number of major figures, including Garrison, Wendell Phillips, and Theodore Parker, it appears to have reached a poignant climax in Remond's contributions. The reverend begins by echoing previous sentiments: "I wish to express my hearty concurrence in what has been

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<sup>40</sup> Speeches delivered at the festival were transcribed and published in *The Liberator* as "The Boston Massacre, March 5, 1770: Commemorative Festival in Faneuil Hall" on March 12, 1858.

said by the preceding speakers with reference to the right of the colored people of this country to strike for their freedom, when the time shall come.” With this sympathy communicated, however, Remond moves to meditate on what it means for the antislavery cause to begin in a space of national remembrance. Distinguishing a black retrospective from a white one, Remond begins by remembering Crispus Attucks, the black soldier who became the first casualty of the Revolutionary War: “The white people of the United States point to their WASHINGTON. It is ours to point to ATTUCKS” (43). Remond proceeds by claiming as a comparable inaugural incident the famous Christiana Riot of Christiana, Pennsylvania, 1851, where former slave and abolitionist William Parker protected fugitive slaves from a Maryland slaveholder named Edward Gorsuch who had traveled North to retrieve them. When the conflict broke out on Parker’s property, shots were fired, and Gorsuch was killed. Hailing the heroism of Parker and others, Remond says to his audience,

[W]e could, if we would, point to FREEMAN, and PARKER, and JACKSON of Christiana celebrity; for if WASHINGTON and ATTUCKS opened the Revolution of the past, PARKER, and JACKSON, and FREEMAN, opened up the Revolution of the present, when they shot down Gorsuch and his son at Christiana, some three years ago. What the former event was to the white men of this country the latter should be to us. (43)

Having compared these historical events, Remond constructs a genealogy of revolution, the past finding itself, in the context of its commemoration, more accurately in a temporality of becoming.

Immediately following this moment, however, Remond breaks with the analogy. “There was a time,” the Reverend clarifies, “when I took pride in the efforts, in the sacrifices, and in the blood that was shed by those identified with us in complexion, during the Revolutionary war, as well as in the war of 1812; and I have not unfrequently referred to my own grandfather as having taken part in the American Revolution.” But this identity, Remond suggests, has its limitations. “I have no disposition now to detract from those efforts,” he says, “further than to say they were misplaced. The patriotism of the colored man of ’76 has been repaid by the most base ingratitude on the part of the white people of this country, that the history of the world records” (43). The Civil War, he contends, is less continuous with the American Revolution than it is a reckoning with its failed realization. With this distinction foregrounded, Remond at last cites the specter of racial phobia in relation to the message he hopes to convey.

I believe, my friends, that we have rights in this country, in spite of slavery and negrophobia, in spite of the American Constitution,—I believe we have rights against the world in argument, and believing this, I hold it to be our right and duty to defy the men and the bodies who shall, at this late hour, undertake still to crush us in the dust. [The text here signals a break for ‘Applause.’] The time is coming when this battle is to be fought. As I said before, let us resolve, in this Hall, that when the hour shall come, we shall be found I the foremost ranks, with our faces, not our backs, to the foe. (43)

With the retrospective as a general frame, Remond engages a complex sequence of events to which racial phobia is made to seem at once crucial—which is to say, capacious as a

referent, exceeding slavery in the extent of its damage—yet also somehow banal enough to require no exposition. Rather than open onto satirical wordplay or an interrogation of America’s political unconscious, the word’s rhetorical posturing seems most evocative in its proximity to a revolutionary “spite.” Whatever its permutations, the concept remains valuable to Remond as a signifier of a disingenuous national mythology.

Counterintuitively, perhaps, I have used this section to explore articles that are actually rather phenomenal at the level of rhetoric, despite the casual appeals to Negrophobia in their conclusions. The *New-York Daily Tribune* article unfolds both a moving and scathing critique of U.S. foreign policy by sustaining the poetic device of epistrophe, reminding readers in each concluding segment of a particular policy’s crude and arbitrary racial basis. Meanwhile, Remond’s speech offers a competing historical retrospective on the American Revolution, reminding his audience that commemorating the death of Crispus Attucks can only be hypocritical, so long as the struggle for liberty and human rights is celebrated as complete, rather than a struggle underway and unfinished. However, it is precisely because colorphobia seems so unessential as an analytic in these writings that we should take note of the etymological shift they represent. On the one hand, they convey the familiarity of their writers with abolitionism’s lexical landscape, and thus continue the work of signposting political solidarity between author, reader, and listener. Nevertheless, they also beg a question that preceding antislavery pieces, premised on elaborating the concept as an extended allegory, took care to preempt: the classic editorial gadfly, *what is this word doing for you exactly?*

## {CODA II}

### **CRAZY, IN LOVE: NEGROPHILIA'S PARALLEL HEMISPHERIC HISTORY**

In the next chapter, I will explore other important ways in which the rhetorical of racial phobia evolved across the late 1840s, 1850s and 1860s. Before digging deeper into this history, however, I want to step through a looking glass of sorts, to explore the complex temporality of certain neighboring concepts—specifically, *Negromania* and *Negrophilia*—which would eventually draw significance from the antislavery turn to racial phobia, yet which also preceded –phobia's robust emergence in abolitionist newspapers elsewhere in the Atlantic world. These neighboring concepts would likewise straddle a shifting distance between satire and diagnosis. Exploring how these terms sometimes did, yet at other times did not, supplement phobia's signification with rhetorical attachments (intimate, contentious, estranged, and otherwise) thus offers a new avenue for pursuing a queer philology of antebellum affect as well. If, as I have suggested, we may conceptualize rabies as a kind of self-germinating parent, from which phobia split into a variable suffix—a rebellious offshoot that, in turn, found a second home in abolitionist print networks of the U.S. North—so may we pursue related affects in American letters as an array of queer friends, acquaintances, and nemeses, from which colorphobia drew a composite sensibility. Rather than building genealogically, moreover, we find that to understand how antebellum emotions such as phobia, mania, and philia built upon and diverged from one another, we must be prepared to move not only forward into apparent avenues of descent, but also backwards, through disparate geographies, as

well as sideways in time, even as the continuity of that laterality may prove difficult to track in concrete terms.

Proslavery newspapers in the U.S. South would eventually take note of the new fashion for the phobia metaphor and occasionally tried to undermine its popularity directly. One of the best illustrations of this return fire is a piece titled “Negromania,” published in Virginia’s *Richmond Republican*, which (against Benjamin Rush’s earlier use of the neologism to psychologize slaveholding) describes abolitionist circles as suffering from a mad obsession with color. “If ever a nation had reason to be sick and tired of a subject,” the piece begins, “this nation has cause to be nauseated to death with the negrophobia.” Soon it becomes evident the author means not race prejudice itself, but rather Negrophobia as a ubiquitous diagnosis. Comparing the obsession with Negrophobia to a “monomania” and “hypochondria,” the piece paints for readers the following scene:

You open a Northern newspaper. Its articles are nearly all devoted to negroism. Its thoughts are as black as its type. You go to a political meeting.—The genius of universal emancipation is flapping his wings from the rostrum....You go home to bed, and your very dreams are of the same sombre color. From morn till night; from night till morn; all is black, black, black; and if the thoughts and sentiments could give a color to the skin, we should expect to see the whole nation of Yankeedom present to-morrow [sic] the richest field imaginable for ‘charcoal sketches.’

No escape is possible, the author laments: so obsessed have abolitionists become, it is a wonder their skin has not yet fallen into rank and become as black as their “type” and

“thoughts.” The point of the thought experiment is to return the favor the of antislavery’s diagnosis. “Is not Abolition madness?” the author asks at another moment. Perhaps the most interesting effect of the piece is that the disease it describes, an epidemic called “black monomania,” has in a sense already been coopted by the rhetoric around colorphobia itself, which described not merely a fear, after all, but a dreadful kind of cathexis in its own right. That is, in its breathless exasperation, the article slips in spite of its protestations into its own kind of black monomania—an obsessive incredulousness at the growing interracial political faction being cultivated by abolitionists. By the end, the author’s rhetoric has devolved into apocalyptic foreshadowing: “Who can listen to the daily outpourings of negrophobia, without feeling that in the political Eden of this Republic the Spirit of Darkness is upon his walk, clothed in an angel’s robes of philanthropy, yet preaching up the same lessons of revolt and disobedience which first led to the downfall of our race?” At least one abolitionist newspaper appears to have found the assessment of racial phobia’s rhetorical force gratifying. So entertained by the complaint were editors Lydia Maria and David Child of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, they reprinted the article for their readers in full.

At the same time, the *Richmond Republican* article shows how the rhetoric of racialized psychologies had begun to straddle divergent impulses: the artful inhabitation of a satirical case formalism, and the fleeting satisfaction of epithetical dismissal. The author’s point, after all, is not merely to unfold abolitionism’s abuses, but to combat the Negrophobia neologism with Negromania as a kind of stigmatizing marker. This instinct to stigmatize by way of epithet would materialize more fully by way of still another coinage in antebellum writing—a category English-speaking Americans referred to as

“Negrophilism.” Unlike the short-lived mania moniker, Negrophilism became a widely referenced concept in Anglophone, Hispanophone, and Francophone literature alike in the early 1800s. In the U.S., the term’s commonest usage emerged in proslavery arguments for the sake of developing a counterpunch to the growing popularity of racial phobia as an abolitionist category of analysis. An article published in *Putnam’s Monthly* in 1854 went so far as to describe abolitionist Negrophilism as a condition of conscious malingering, whereby “Abolition Munchausens” were dedicating “their imaginations and their energies to the concoction and extensive circulation in the North of the grossest misrepresentations of the Southern people” (638). The term gained traction in the Caribbean too. Journalist Jane Cazneau takes note of the concept’s Spanish pronunciation in her autobiographical *Eagle Pass; Or, Life on the Border* (1852), referencing “negrophilo” as “a word the Cubans have lately coined” (Cazneau 26). Perhaps the most famous use of the concept in U.S. writing appears in Edgar Allan Poe’s 1845 review of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s “Poems on Slavery.” Criticizing the volume, Poe concludes that the poems must have been written for “the especial use of those negrophilic old ladies of the north, who form so large a part of Mr. Longfellow’s friends.” A soundbite impressive in its ability to pack racism, sexism, and ageism into the space of a few words, its sting lay in Poe’s allusion to Negrophobia’s intuitive opposite: a pathology of love, clearly replete with erotic undertones. A term Poe has been credited with coining (Pollin 39), “negrophilic” attests all the more actively in its adjectival function to the growing popularity of the epithet as a tool for navigating political affiliation and dissent. In concluding this chapter, I want to suggest that our



understanding of colorphobia's antebellum traction remains unfinished until Negrophilia's uses have also been teased apart.<sup>41</sup>

As Negrophilia's popularity as an epithet spread in certain circles, so was it reclaimed by abolitionists in other accounts, not unlike queer and racial reclamations familiar to us today along the lines of what Michel Foucault famously called "reverse discourse." In 1852, for example, Cuban abolitionist Andrés Avelino de Orihuela would proudly claim "negrófilo" in a letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe, as a condition fitting for an "abolicionista"—a letter Orihuela went on to include as a prefatory document to his Spanish translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *La Cabaña del Tío Tom* (Orihuela 2). At the same time, while U.S. interlocutors deployed Negrophilism in direct dialogue with the rhetoric of racial phobia, its etymology on a transatlantic scale had also developed with some independence, especially in earlier decades. Here, it becomes useful to go back in time a bit, to a moment when, in fact, the discourse around colorphobia had not quite begun to take off in U.S. political debate. Without question, the most evocative piece of fiction to thematize the discourse around Negrophilia at length in the antebellum period would appear in French and English alike just before the discourse around phobia began trending in U.S. newspapers in the mid-1830s. Published in French in 1826, and later in English by a Philadelphia press in 1833, Victor Hugo's novel documenting the origins of the Haitian Revolution, *Bug-Jargal*, features as one of its main characters a villain the narrator refers to simply as "the Negrophile."

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<sup>41</sup> For other articles exploring Negrophilism in a U.S. context, see "British Philanthropy and American Slavery" authored by "a Southern lady" in *Debow's Review*, vol. 14, 1853; and "Equality of the Races—Haytien and British Experiments," published in *Debow's Review*, vol. 25, 1858.

In its immediate anticipation of the phobia phenomenon in U.S. abolitionism, the English translation of *Bug-Jargal* published in Philadelphia in 1833 occupies a vague relation to the discourse discussed above—a relation I will speculate upon further below. Before getting to these questions, however, it will be worth considering the novel on its own terms, as American readers would have encountered its lexical experimentation. As scholars have noted, *Bug-Jargal* was penned by a young, politically conservative-royalist Hugo (just twenty-four years of age in 1826). Nonetheless, as Susan Gillman notes, “the novel can’t seem to make up its mind about the slave revolt it represents so self-consciously” (377). Commencing toward the onset of the Bois Caïman uprising in August 1791, a common origin story for histories of the revolution, the novel puts on full display a sinister corruption on both sides of the conflict, missing no opportunity to expose the naïve, indulgent abuses of the slaveholding elite, while also situating the novel’s fiercest drama in sadistic revenge plots orchestrated by ex-slave revolutionaries. The only “good” characters—white protagonist, Léopold D’Auverney, and the African-born king Pierrot, known to fellow revolutionaries as the fierce leader (*a la* Toussiant Louverture) named Bug-Jargal—turn out to be tragic heroes, who find ways to preserve interracial friendship and the promise of progress only to perish by the novel’s conclusion. External to their friendship, Hugo’s novel unfolds a chilling chaos of slaughter and betrayal.<sup>42</sup> In documenting the multilinguality of the novel, which shifts

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<sup>42</sup> Katherine M. Bonin has argued that *Bug-Jargal* is a deeply contradictory novel for important reasons. Published first as a short story in 1820, then expanded into a novel by 1826, *Bug-Jargal* represents the shifting perspectives of its author across this time. As Bonin notes, “Hugo emphatically stated his opposition to revising his early works, on principle” (194). Specifically, it is known that during the 1820s and early 1830s, Hugo regularly made it known that he didn’t believe in altering previously published works in new or expanded editions. In short, Bonin explains, Hugo was beginning to view his

frequently from French into Spanish and Creole expressions (a plurality compounded further in English translations), Gillman has suggested that one of *Bug-Jargal*'s strongest themes is the interleaving of miscommunication across verbal exchanges. As Gillman puts it, "The novel thus registers the complex politics of transatlantic, interracial dialogue over this period and compresses France's continuing engagement with the Haitian Revolution and Afro-Creole independence into the linguistic registers of the translational novel" (377). In short, the conflict of the revolution cannot finally be disentangled from the multi- and cross-lingual interactions by which it transpires as narrative. Gillman thus observes further that the "language politics of Hugo's novel interject an unstable perspective on the history of race and the timeline of revolution in the Americas" (384). Yet while *Bug-Jargal*'s language has been given sustained attention in Gillman and elsewhere, critics have yet to tackle the philology behind one of Hugo's most memorable characters, "the Negrophile," whose very title (a neologism occasioned by abolitionist debate) speaks directly to this fluidity and fungibility of language in the making of race and interracial affiliations.

As Chris Bongie notes in his 2004 English translation of *Bug-Jargal*, Hugo's Negrophile character, referred to at other moments in the novel as "the citizen-general," indexes Hugo's familiarity with the writings of the French abolitionist Abbé Grégoire. In *De la Littérature des Nègres* (1808), Grégoire observed of his proslavery opponents:

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"body of work" as an "*œuvres complètes*," which needed to maintain "its original form as a kind of public archive, possessing 'cette sorte de valeur historique qui s'attache à tous les documents honnêtes où se retrouve la physionomie d'une époque.'" In light of Hugo's authorial perspective, Bonin concludes of *Bug-Jargal*: "This painfully self-contradictory novel is better understood, not as a reflection of the author's putative monarchist or liberal, pro- or anti-slavery convictions, but rather as an exploration of the relationship between language and the exercise of power" (194).

“They have created the epithets of *negrophile* and *blancophage* [eater of whites] in the hope of sullyng their opponents. Their assumption is that every friend of the Blacks is an enemy of the whites and of France, and in the pay of England” (72-3). Claiming affiliation with French philosophers and philanthropists of Grégoire’s political persuasion, Hugo’s Negrophile introduces himself toward the beginning of the novel by donning the appellation nonchalantly. However, in Hugo’s characterization, the Negrophile represents the worst kind of hypocrisy—posturing himself as a learned friend of the enslaved, while keeping five-hundred slaves himself and practicing the grossest violences and despotic strategies to quell insurrection on the horizon. Introducing himself at a General Assembly toward the beginning of the novel, the citizen advises fellow plantation owners, “Let us punish—not fight” (60). He proceeds to recount an incident earlier that year when, to curtail rebellion on his plantation, he beheaded fifty slaves and mounted their heads on palm trees along the avenue to his estate. The narrator tells us halfway through his remarks, “This execrable speech was heard with horror” (61). Yet Hugo casts the citizen-general in still a more disturbing light when the figure proceeds by defending his reputation with a mixture of name-dropping and twisted self-righteousness. As the other attendees cry out “Abominable!” and “Dreadful! dreadful!” in reply, the citizen-general continues:

My character, surely, is above suspicion; for I am a zealous negrophile, and correspond with all the noblest spirits of the age: with Brissot and Pruneau de Pomme-Gouge in France; with Hans Sloane in England; with Magain in America; with Pezil in Germany; with Olivarus in Denmark

with Wadstrohm in Sweden; with Peter Paulus in Holland; with Avendano in Spain; and with the Abbe Pierre Tamburini in Italy! (61)

Most notable in the speech, of course, is its stark non-sequitur: crudely, the citizen situates his empty claim to a political Negrophilia next to a vague list of correspondents, the implication being that the company he keeps is testament enough to his moral soundness. His vernacular familiarity with transnational dialogue on the subject of slavery, paired with a claim to be one of that dialogue's distinguished participants, thus establishes the two fundamental nodes of his characterization. The narrator tells us, "The citizen-general seemed to rise in his self-esteem as he proceeded in the catalogue, and, when he had pronounced the last name, he added, with a sigh, 'But here we have no philosophes!'" (61). Following this moment, the self-selected appellation sticks; in one of the novel's most disturbing ironies, the citizen-general becomes "the Negrophile" for the duration of his appearance in Hugo's narration.

Ultimately, Hugo uses this character to dramatize the novel's most perfect and sensational reversal of power once the rebellion commences. We meet the character again when he has been captured and brought to the revolution's clever and bloodthirsty Generalissimo Biassou. Immediately, the citizen-general devolves into spineless groveling. Biassou answers his captive, "Why, thou art an aristocrat" (119). The citizen assures Biassou of his ready allegiance in turn. "Oh no, indeed," he explains, "I am...a fervent negrophile." Catching the unfamiliar pseudonym Biassou cries back, "Negrophile! what is a negrophile?" The citizen replies hesitantly, "Why, it is—it is....a friend to the blacks." Sensing what he is up to, Biassou moves to draw the citizen into a cat-and-mouse game of intimidation:

‘[S]o thou are not a friend to men of colour?’

‘It is men of colour I meant to say,’ answered the negrophile submissively, ‘and in proof of that, I am connected with all the most famous partizans [sic] of the negroes and mulattoes—’

‘*Negroes and mulattoes!*’ exclaimed Biassou—‘Dost thou come here to insult us with these vile and odious names, which thy race has invented in token of contempt of ours? Know, sirrah, that we are men of colour, and blacks—do you understand, monsieur le colon?’

‘Pardon me, pardon me, monseignor; I did not mean to offend: it is merely a bad habit, contracted in childhood’....

‘Let alone thy *monseignor*—I repeat that I love not such aristocratic forms.’ (119-20)

By the end of the exchange, the narrator explains, “The poor negrophile was at his wits’ end,” clueless as to how he should address this individual “who rejected...the language of the aristocrats and the patriots” (120). The citizen has met his oratorical match and then some: Biassou at once mirrors his captive’s penchant for semantic acrobatics and, in so doing, exposes the citizen’s favorite equivocations to be laughable when put to the test. It is subsequent to this moment, however, that we at last begin to get a sense of where Hugo is heading with the *Nérophilie* theme, in particular. The erotic undertones of the epithet surface as Biassou decides to see how far the citizen’s passivity will go. “So thou lovest the blacks and the mulattoes, dost thou!” Biassou shouts. “Love them! that I do,” the captive cries. Biassou tells the Negrophile he will let him live as long as he agrees to be his page—to ready his “pipe” whenever he requests it and to follow him at all times with

a “fan of peacock and parrot-feathers” (125). The sycophant readily submits “with a thousand demonstrations of gratitude and joy.” Yet here, at last, Biassou reveals he knows more than he has been letting on. He knows well who the Negrophile is, including the crimes the he has committed against the enslaved on his own estate. Having driven the Negrophile to this basest sort of docility, Biassou finally condemns the prisoner to death.

The dark comedy of Hugo’s scene rests upon the dramatic irony of the Negrophile’s fate. Yet, as multiple critics have noted regarding the novel as a whole, *Bug-Jargal* has much more going on than mere irony and cathartic indulgence. Another line Biassou delivers in his back-and-forth with the Negrophile may provide the best clue as to why Hugo chooses to identify one of his main characters with such a duplicitous moniker. As the citizen scrambles to find the right title for addressing Biassou early in their dialogue, he lands eventually on the reciprocal title “citizen” (120). At this, Biassou lashes out in an informative tirade. “Citizen! citizen!” he exclaims to the Negrophile. “what does the fellow mean? or for whom does he take me? Thy jacobinical jargon grates upon my ear still worse than thy aristocratic.” Biassou conveys a similar sentiment a couple of pages later. After urging the Negrophile to prove his loyalty by putting him in contact with wealthy merchants, he receives this reply: “Hero of humanity! it is not merchants with whom I am connected, it is with philanthropists, philosophers and negrophiles” (122-3). Biassou retorts, “[H]ere he comes again with his unintelligible words: speak plain, man” (123). In both scenes, the citizen fails to realize how hollow his rhetoric sounds in the direst of contexts. In trying to save himself from being executed, he

can only drop names his captors have never heard of and self-identify *ad nauseam* with his favorite trending slogan.

Undoubtedly, there is something that borders on anti-intellectualism in this caricature of philosophes and philanthropists as fools. Moreover, there is something disingenuous, on Hugo's part, in the association of an epithet used primarily to demean abolitionism with such a morally bankrupt antagonist. Still, this suspicion should not prevent us from deriving an important critique from Hugo's interrogation of the invention of fashionable political lexicons. Bongie has suggested that Hugo's interrogation of "jargon" is at the very heart of *Bug-Jargal*. Offering an interpretation of *Bug-Jargal*'s title, Bongie riffs, "If the hyphenated (or, we might say, hybridized) word 'Bug-Jargal' initially appears to make no sense when taken as a whole, a certain sense can be gleaned from it if we begin by reading its two parts as separate words. It is not difficult, for instance, to recognize the presence of the word 'jargon' in the unrecognizable 'Jargal'" (11). Bongie goes on to note that the word "jargon," which appears seven times over the course of the novel, would have carried at least four connotations in Hugo's day, each spelled out in Littré's nineteenth-century French dictionary, including (1) "corrupted language"; (2) "a foreign language that one doesn't understand"; (3) "a particular language adopted by certain people"; and (4) "language with a double meaning" (qtd. in Bongie 12).<sup>43</sup> Bongie pursues this theme to demonstrate, like Gillman, the "chaotic world

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<sup>43</sup> Hugo's interest in the linguistic function of jargon has been addressed by Heather Turo as well. Turo writes, "Of the many hypotheses that exist about the title, the one that is most salient, in terms of a language narrative, would be jargal, the false cognate to *jargon*" (170). Like other readers of *Bug-Jargal*, Turo uses this phonetic relation to open onto a reading of the novel's multilinguality. Turo observes, "Whether or not Bug comes from the long vowel and velar plosive sounds found in Hugo—thus making the title *Hugo-Jargon*—does not matter so much in a language narrative as long as it is someone's



of words-in-translation” that animates *Bug-Jargal*, contending that Hugo’s narration itself regularly loses control. I would argue that Hugo’s resistance to jargon, as channeled through Biassou, helps illuminate the Negrophile’s significance as well. The strongest theme tied to the Negrophile’s demise is not simply that words are cheap, but rather that language’s potential to demarcate political affiliation is never stable, but instead seismic, subject to quick reversals, and hazardous—even more so when that language begins to serve as an opaque shortcut to self-authored moral elevation. In such instances, a word that might elsewhere animate terms of critique slips easily into obscure, equivocating jargon. For the Negrophile, this failure to unfold his appellation into something tangible and accessible (not to mention authentic) becomes not just the sign of his villainy, but also the vehicle of his ruin.

## CONCLUSION

In light of Negrophilia’s parallel history, I conclude this chapter with the following question: is there anything to be gleaned from *Bug-Jargal* to enhance our reading of the rhetorical turn to colorphobia in U.S. abolitionism? To pose the question another way, how should we understand the relationship between *colorphobia*—a category of analysis fashioned in the form of satirical diagnostic and metaphor, which only subsequently began to distill into a pithy euphemism—and *Negrophilism*, designed from the outset to function essentially as a dismissive epithet? What kinds of speech acts

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jargon, and in the case of this novel, we can interpret jargon as a reference to Haitian Creole, which serves as a linguistic springboard for a plethora of metaphors” (170). While interested in this relationship as well, I would argue that it is important not to equate Hugo’s “jargon” to multilinguality. In Biassou’s usage, the goal is clearly to critique jargon as an elevated form of language, designed to demarcate educated fraternities who traffic in highbrow ideals rather than concrete politics.

do they describe, and what are their separate (or mutual) relations to the philological terrain Hugo demarcates as “jargon”? In light of the hydrophobia analogy, which animated the phobia phenomenon as it began to capture the imagination of transatlantic reading publics, it would clearly be a mistake to dismiss the differences between these terms as merely ideological. Their differences are also formal, epistemological, aesthetic, and tonal, to name just a few parameters integral to understanding the antislavery archives explored above. But how then should we describe the interrelation between colorphobia and Negrophilia as speech acts, both formulated to intervene in slavery debates by inventing addictive linguistic indices to do political work at the level of affect?

In *Excitable Speech* (1997), Judith Butler unfolds a theory of language by pursuing a new take on the relation between forces J. L. Austin famously called illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. The abridged version of Austin’s theory tends to go as follows: the illocutionary function of language occurs whenever speech achieves its purpose in and of itself (for instance, a warning, promise, or declaration), while the purest perlocutionary function occurs when a speech act effects some change or consequence beyond its immediate content. Yet, as Butler notes, this definition of the illocutionary as a self-sufficient identity between speech act and purpose is easily misconstrued when conceptualized in a vacuum. The caveat underlying the status of the illocutionary is that it can only occur so long as there exist agreed upon “conventions” capable of being discerned “at the moment” of a corresponding “utterance” (3). For Austin, these conventions exist within larger “ritual or ceremonial” structures. Thus, Butler explains, “As utterances, [illocutionary speech acts] work to the extent that they are given in the

form of a ritual, that is, repeated in time, and hence, maintain a sphere of operation that is not restricted to the moment of the utterance itself.” The “moment” in which speech act and purpose coincide is, more accurately, a “condensed historicity,” which “exceeds itself in past and future directions, an effect of prior and future invocations that constitute and escape the instance of utterance.” Perhaps the first relevance of Butler’s emphasis on historicity to the rhetorical phenomena discussed above will here become evident: antislavery print media in the Americas shows us a ritual in the making, fragmented among nascent connotations competing to become convention. Before turning directly to this application, however, it is worth thinking with Butler further. Most important to the temporal paradox she unfolds, regarding the definition of the illocutionary function as a phenomenon of immediacy, is that this immediacy is only tentatively propped up by a transmomentary excess, a kind of historical refuse, which at once underlies illocutionary potential and begs by virtue of its rituality to be effaced.

Butler opens up this problematic in *Excitable Speech* to expose the more specific concerns of what she calls the “fault lines” intrinsic to the illocutionary function of hate speech, a concept she refers to primarily as “injurious speech.” By fault lines, Butler means the chasms in signification opened by the illocutionary function’s equivocating appeal to immediacy. Here, Butler gives us a way to understand the linguistic work done by epithets, in particular. On the one hand, the fault lines characteristic of illocutionary acts help illuminate the damage to which injurious speech aspires. To the extent that injurious speech functions as a kind of ritual, without needing to give an account of its formation as such, Butler concludes, “To be injured by speech is to suffer a loss of context, that is, not to know where you are” (4). Butler explains further that what is

“[e]xposed” in such an interaction “is precisely the volatility of one’s ‘place’ within the community of speakers; one can be ‘put in one’s place’ by such speech, but such a place may be no place” (4). Yet if these fault lines, in fact, are what make injurious speech fathomable, they can also be a source of its undoing. If the immediate designs of injurious speech belong necessarily, paradoxically to a temporality in the making, so must they also be subject to the volatility they purport to inflict, or what Butler describes as a “discursive performativity that is not a discrete series of speech acts, but a ritual chain of resignifications whose origin and end remain unfixed and unfixable” (14). Butler contends that this space of antagonism between iteration and an accumulating context paves the way for contaminant etymologies to intervene. She writes, “Such a loosening of the link between act and injury, however, opens up the possibility for a counter-speech, a kind of talking back, that would be foreclosed by the tightening of that link” (15). Thus the historicity of injurious speech, its dependence on an accumulation of context, becomes also the sign of an accumulating frailty. In the context of tracking colorphobia’s evolution as an antislavery analytic, specifically, Butler’s formulation reminds us that phobia’s satirical turn emerged in just such a context, finding an opportunity in the vicinity of an accumulation of proslavery speech acts to develop a counter-speech, one capable of breaking open slavery’s constitutive fissures.

Along similar lines, we might contend that, in a U.S. context, *Negrophilism* represents the failed attempt of proslavery periodicals to mitigate, and imitate, phobia’s infectious popularity. In Francophone texts, we find that *Nérophilie* emerged, by contrast, as a kind of hate speech largely untethered to phobia’s counter-punch. Even so, Hugo’s interrogation of jargon as a particular kind of political tactic implicates these

neologisms, transgeographically and translinguistically, in the same lexical camp. What links them, we might argue, is not their proximity to injury so much as their particular manifestation as speech, in their navigation of illocutionary and perlocutionary forces. In each case, as neologisms, such concepts assumed the basic illocutionary function of *naming* their political milieu. In other words, they not only framed debates over slavery as a contest of pathological affects, but did the work, moreover, of situating that affective context around embryonic lexical indices. In Hugo's account, it is precisely this tactic that risks sounding esoteric, alienating, or even vapid when inserted for the sake of expediency. Words that would seem to gesture evidently enough to a desired perlocutionary effect (the fortification of political solidarity), take instead an aspect of flippant inscrutability, where naming threatens nearly to become an end in itself.

As documented above, the rhetoric around racial phobia was hardly fated to this illocutionary dead end. Rather, in creating a new convention, colorphobia's rhetorical turn assumed an innovative formalism, transforming a punning sensibility into a dynamic satirical case genre, through which an affective metaphor could be summoned repeatedly, in ever-unfolding permutations. We arrive at a curious irony: the greatest attenuating force compromising phobia's use value over time seems to have been its very success at becoming *commonplace*, which is to say its evolution into a euphemism needing no introduction. In discerning how phobia's usage began to distill into a convenient placeholder, I want to conclude this chapter by observing an affinity between Butler's perspective on the condensed historicity of illocutionary acts, and an antebellum writer who made some comparable formulations in 1844. In his influential essay "The Poet," Ralph Waldo Emerson takes a moment to observe that the higher calling of the

etymologist lies in this purpose: to “find[] the deadest word to have been once a brilliant picture.” “Language is fossil poetry,” Emerson goes on to elaborate. “As the limestone of the continent consists of infinite masses of the shells of animalcules, so language is made up of images, or tropes, which now, in their secondary use, have long ceased to remind us of their poetic origin.” One of the most remarkable qualities of the corpus I have aimed to uncover here is that it offers a sequence of apertures onto this phenomenon of sedimentation. Adapting Emerson, we might describe phobia’s antebellum uses as having first thrived on a gothic lyricism that has since become fossilized—a lyricism designed, in its purest form, to explore boundaries of human civility by satirizing the readiness of allegedly democratic publics to foam at the mouth. The loss of phobia’s figurative reverberations since this earlier dynamism, as a hybrid affect uniting irrational fear with canine rabidity, shows us a real-time unfolding of this process, described in Emerson as language’s preemptive decay into a sign of loss. This is not to say that phobia’s lexical sedimentation neared anything like completion by the end of the Civil War; rather, its divergent uses persisted in contest with one another. Yet, in this persistence, we discover one of the most significant tensions in an antebellum phobic imagination taking root—the tendency, on the one hand, for phobia to trend toward the status of jargon, and, on the other, to keep surfacing in public consciousness as an assemblage of divergent, allegorical elaborations.

## CHAPTER 3

### REVULSION, FOR STOWE:

#### NEGROPHOBIA VS. NEGRO-EQUALITY-PHOBIA IN *DRED*:

##### *A TALE OF THE GREAT DISMAL SWAMP*

There is no principle so awful through all nature as the principle of *growth*. It is a mysterious and dread condition of existence, which, place it under what impediment or disadvantage you will, is constantly forcing on; and when unnatural pressure hinders it, develops in forms portentous and astonishing.

- Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*, Volume 2

Following an analysis of Victor Hugo's personification of a hypocritical *Negrophilia* in *Bug-Jargal*, an obvious question descends on this study: did the rise of a phobic imagination in U.S. abolition produce any corresponding aesthetic tradition unto itself, beyond the editorial conventions I have documented thus far? The following chapter will aim to answer this question. In fact, U.S. abolitionists created not just a rhetorical tradition around the analysis of race prejudice and slavery's motivating pathologies, but also an aesthetic archive to match, including poetry, visual media, and fiction, all of which this chapter will explore in depth. At the same time, we find in navigating these aspects of antislavery print culture that the rhetoric surrounding colorphobia was not especially easy to transform into aesthetic production. Shorter modes, such as poetry and satirical cartoons prove to have been somewhat easier, likely because they required less of a sustained commitment on the part of an artist's audience. These short forms capitalized, we might conclude, on what Edgar Allan Poe famously described in "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846) as a "unity of impression," made

possible by the relative brevity of interaction they solicited from readers: they could excite the idea of phobia by way of some sudden, spectacular mechanism, then conclude just as quickly. Long fiction, it appears, presented a more difficult task, in that it required a nuanced synthesis of protracted, intermittent engagements (a perfect recipe, in Poe's estimation, for the fragmentation of literary impression) with an affective register still very much in the making, as the previous chapter has endeavored to show in depth. While I have attended primarily to the matter of the linguistic parameters of colorphobia thus far, it will be the argument of this chapter that searching out U.S. antislavery's best novelistic representation of a phobic aesthetic provides an opportunity, moreover, to consider the influence of racial phobia, as an identifiable social force, on the way abolitionists conceptualized emotion broadly as a political tool.

Antislavery literature offers a couple of strong contenders in the way of novelistic representation. One is a novel William Lloyd Garrison would nominate himself, in one of the most widely circulated essays of his career, "The Infidelity of Abolitionism," first printed in 1855. Seizing the first half of the essay as an opportunity to try his own hand at describing colorphobia's sinister influence, Garrison begins by referencing a vague "It" across multiple paragraphs:

[I]t has engendered and established a complexional caste...pervading all parts of the United States like a malaria-tainted atmosphere; in its development more malignant at the North than at the South; poisoning the life-blood of the most refined and the most depraved alike; and making the remotest connection with the colored race a leprous taint. (202)



A disease cultivated by slavery, yet which has spread north as well, Garrison's "It" finally finds a name in the essay's sixth paragraph: an "all-prevailing color-phobia, the dreadful consequence of chattel slavery." In the midst of this rhetorical buildup, Garrison inserts a curious asterisk to signal a footnote. In the footnote, Garrison recommends a novel recently published by Maine writer and antislavery advocate Mary Hayden Pike. "For an unexaggerated picture" of colorphobia's "natural operations" in the U.S., Garrison observes, "see the thrilling work entitled 'Caste, A Story of Republican Equality'" (202). With emphasis on the novel's accuracy as well as its narrative merit, Garrison suggests that here, at last, a writer has produced a novel that does justice to the racial phobia abolitionist newspapers had been addressing for the last two decades. Interestingly, what we find in turning to *Caste* is that nowhere does Pike use the rhetoric of racial phobia outright. In searching for a clue to explain Garrison's appraisal, the most likely reason appears to be Pike's interest in depicting the psychological depths of proslavery. This interest comes through toward the conclusion of the novel in a passage where Pike compares the project of her novel to a legend passed down from the days of the Salem witch trials. Seized and "tossed with her broomstick in a blanket 'seventy times as high as the moon,'" one witch was rumored to have "answered the hootings" of her "mob" with "a prophetic assurance that she would 'sweep the cobwebs out of the sky'" (Pike 540). Identifying with the witch, Pike notes that while "children laugh at the joke and heed not the allegory," the reader who "looks thoughtfully down the vista of the past can see how, one by one, the ideas that darkened the *mental firmament* have been torn away, and the closed nooks, where dust and cobwebs gather, laid open to the light of truth" (Pike's emph.). In this final passage, Pike brings the allegorical and psychological

dimensions of her novel into this hybrid imaginative space. The “mental firmament” she intends to sweep and expose to the “light of truth” speaks to the psychological terrain *Caste* investigates more generally—terrain Garrison, in turn, took to be continuous with an interiority rooted in the pathology of racial phobia.

As for a more targeted novelistic engagement with phobia, there are still better candidates. The most tantalizing example is an excerpt from a novel that alludes to the discourse on phobia directly, yet which was never published in full, and may never have been completed. Accompanied by a tagline reading “Extract from an unpublished anti-slavery work,” a piece carrying the title “American Colorphobia” appeared in *The Liberator* in 1859. A strange, conspicuously partial narrative, “American Colorphobia” describes a scene inside of a “saloon” on a steamer in which a light-skinned woman, accompanied by her two children, is discovered to be of African descent by fellow passengers, and thereafter ordered by the boat’s captain to remove herself from the room for the duration of the voyage. When the mother refuses, explaining to the captain that there is a storm outside and that she has “bought a right to the place I occupy,” the drama of the situation begins to escalate until, at last, a strange figure named “Major Landon” intervenes. A wild, potentially unstable passenger, Landon answers the threats of the white mob against the mother and her children first by calling for his dog “Trusty.” With sarcasm, Landon explains to his companion,

I know you are not an Abolitionist, Trusty; you have too much regard for the credit and respectability of the whole doggish race to be an Abolitionist, but you have the feelings of honor and love, Trusty, in your

heart, and I commend to your watch-care this lady and her little ones. Let  
no man come within three feet of them, on the peril of life. (68)

Obediently, Trusty turns his attention to the crowd of white passengers: “his eyes, like moving balls of fire, turned every way, to guard the avenues of approach.” When someone from the mob suggests they shoot Trusty, Major Landon himself begins to transform, as though mirroring the madness of the mob instinctually. The narrator explains that, standing firm, Landon “began to grit his teeth and roll his eyes in a very appalling manner. Every eye was now turned upon him, and the conclusion was readily arrived at in every mind, that the man was mad—a dangerous maniac” (68). Alarmed at Landon’s sudden mutations, the mob disperses. Most interesting in the story is the way the hydrophobia metaphor essentially travels from the mob to the boat’s resident, militant abolitionist, Major Landon. The author’s implication, readers are left to intuit, is that, faced with a rampant colorphobia, antislavery’s best option might be to fight rabidity through imitation—which is to say, to fight phobia with some other, alternative manifestation of a hydrophobic disposition. The provocation is this: *what uses might abolition itself have for a phobic aesthetic?*

In taking this provocation seriously, the present chapter will argue that efforts to aestheticize a phobic imagination fostered in antislavery nonfiction consistently found it necessary to navigate two poles well represented by Pike’s *Caste* and the anonymously published “American Colorphobia.” Writers found that one of the dominant tensions in the rhetoric of racial phobia had to do with the question of whether the discourse represented another offshoot of sentimentalism—the affective tradition with which abolitionism has generally been treated as coterminous—or something else, wherein a

phobic imagination might be pursued as potentially generative and politically meaningful in its own right. By the late 1840s, this tension became manifest across antislavery editorials too. Despite the popularity of colorphobia and Negrophobia as categories of analysis, a number of abolitionists began to challenge the implicit hypothesis they harbored: in short, that slavery was first and foremost a product of private, interior fear. One of the most striking criticisms, along these lines, targeted the pity embedded in colorphobia's medicalization. To portray proslavery as a disease, certain writers began to suggest, was to give slavery the benefit of the doubt—to imagine that slaveholders were not in proper control of their emotions, and that slavery was merely an outgrowth of this psychological crisis. As I will show below, many who contested this implication did so by reactivating a satirical sensibility long familiar to the phobia metaphor, ventriloquizing the now established rhetoric of phobia in order to expose its deepest inadequacies.

Alongside this critique, still other abolitionists who resisted colorphobia as a concept speculated that it foreshadowed a public sphere reduced to psychological pseudo-diagnostics, where politics would have as its first responsibility the eradication of mental illness. It will be my final argument that no work of antebellum literature interrogated the rise of a phobic imagination among abolitionists more adeptly in these terms than Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*, published four years after *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1856. Far from sentimentalizing or pathologizing fear, Stowe attempts throughout *Dred* to recuperate loathing and revulsion as political feelings worth galvanizing. To put it another way, much like the excerpt "American Colorphobia," *Dred* pursues something we might justifiably identify as a phobic aesthetic. Most explicitly, Stowe stages this recuperation homonymically in the black outlaw protagonist Dred

himself, whose militant resistance in the swamplands around the Virginia-North Carolina border positions a swelling sense of *dread*, among slaveholders and their allies, as an affect vital to slave revolt.

**“OUR PITY BECOMES MODIFIED, BY AN ADMIXTURE OF CONTEMPT”:  
RETHINKING SENTIMENTALISM THROUGH/AS ABOLITIONIST PARODY**

Linking the diagnostic, figurative, and euphemistic uses of colorphobia explored in my second chapter was a shared hermeneutic, which situated fear as the root cause of racial bigotry. Locating an affective foundation for slavery allowed abolitionists to theorize the psychology of systemic oppression as belonging to an identifiable subjective state, and thus to counsel a therapeutic model for healing a divided nation. Not all abolitionists were satisfied by this idea. Another piece written for *The North Star* by John Dick titled “Colorphobia—Who Are Its Victims?” conveys candid doubt. “It is difficult to know,” Dick observes, “whether those who are afflicted with this disorder, are most to be pitied or despised.” While their “sufferings” and “torments” are certainly real, he continues, “when we consider that this is the result of ignorance—ignorance of the most deplorable description, which they might, if they had chosen, have prevented—our pity becomes, in some degree, modified by an admixture of contempt.” Implicit throughout the article is a resistance to framing proponents of the slave system as a naïve coterie of “victims.” Debate over this rhetorical turn spoke further to the matter of whether pity, as a progressive strategy, had any legitimate object in the malady phobia described.

Along the lines of “Colorphobia—Who Are Its Victims?” some abolitionists began to interpret the turn to phobia as an uncritical gesture of sympathy. A call to sympathy was, indeed, fundamental to many accounts. One of the articles mentioned in

the previous chapter, “A New Kind of Phobia,” thus concludes its comparison of Negrophobia with hydrophobia by highlighting an essential point of departure: “There is one difference, however—the hydrophobic patient is sure to die; the negrophobic *may* get well—so that there is yet hope for our neighbor” (2). Another writer describes the afflicted as a group of severely “affected” “sensitive souls” (148).<sup>44</sup> The appeal of phobia lay partly in an effort to reach a hand across a widening political chasm.<sup>45</sup> To others, however, these expressions of sympathy signaled a misleading disavowal of proslavery agency, through which portraits of a sickly nation were being used to dilute urgent ideological conflict.

Thus, we arrive at an important dilemma at the heart of this chapter: how should the discourse around colorphobia supplement or alter our understanding not just of an evolving abolitionist lexicon in the U.S., but of abolitionist affect as well? In many ways, Dick’s article taps into a familiar critique of American antislavery. Abolitionist affect has

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<sup>44</sup> Cunningham, E.B. “A Guilty Nation.” *The Liberator* 9.37 (Sep. 13, 1839): 148.

<sup>45</sup> As a major trend in abolitionist newspapers, the rhetoric of colorphobia carried connotations of consciousness raising as well. In an interesting, early elaboration of the hydrophobia analogy in 1836, one writer thus conjures the following hypothetical situation: “Suppose that the southern states were full of mad dogs which were beginning to bite the people, and suppose we of the north were quite asleep to the matter, confident of our safety though exposed to danger, having in our hands the means both of prevention and cure, but quite ignorant of hydrophobia, and careless of the fate of our neighbors. And supposed it were the object of a lecturer to stir us up to act for the relief of others and our own salvation; would it not prodigiously increase his power, if in the course of his lecture half a dozen men, bitten by mad dogs, and foaming with canine madness, should rush in among his audience? There would be proof positive, not only that hydrophobia was a dreadful disease, but that his northern hearers were endangered by it. Now, in regard to slavery....we know, and can effectually illustrate, the diabolical horrors of the system which crushes our colored brethren at the south, by the malicious, mean and murderous outrages upon their humble advocates at the north” (“The Duty of Abolitionists” 1). With this appeal to the value of forging an anti-slavery didacticism, the author conjures the imagery of something like a public service announcement, by which individuals naïve to slavery’s abuses might be counseled toward healthful disillusionment.

long held a privileged place in the history of a literary movement defined by its emotional engagements: in short, the transatlantic movement known as *sentimentalism*, generally understood to have reached its apogee (some would say its nadir) in Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). A novel remembered for being the best-selling novel of the antebellum period, as well as for the role it played in fomenting disillusionment with the cruelties of slavery in advance of the Civil War, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* famously built on a deep tradition in fiction writing, in which an indulgence in the emotional solicitations of novels became a cultural index of shared virtues. Here lay the hallmark of the sentimentalist's aesthetic, a tradition familiar far beyond Stowe, via novels educating young women against sexual vice (such as Susanna Rowson's 1791 *Charlotte Temple*), as well as literature documenting poverty in the context of growing industrialization (for instance, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Cry of the Children," or Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*). In short, it is through the familiar overlap between antislavery and sentimentalism—to which the article "Colorphobia—Who Are Its Victims?" is partly addressed—that abolitionist affect has a long history of being sidelined by scholars as uncritically mawkish and monotone.

However, to better understand the intersection of affect and abolition, we need to pursue a reconsideration of what sentimentalism entails, in both a critical and historical sense, when invoked as a mode of political engagement. On the one hand, it is evident enough that the sentimentalism associated with *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has to do with a lachrymose expression of sympathy, sorrow, and, to some extent, guilt. That is, the first rule of interacting with the novel is that one should be ready, in the most literal sense of the idiom, to have a "good cry": a cry that proceeds organically insofar as the events

related in a given narrative tap into a reader's corresponding moral sense. To be sure, Robin Bernstein has shown us through her engagement with the material culture of antislavery just how "scripted" this expression of emotion was for antebellum readers. One of the objects to materialize in the vicinity of the novel, Bernstein demonstrates, was an Uncle-Tom-inspired handkerchief, with which readers were intended to dab their moistened eyes, without losing composure in the manner of a mucousy, handkerchief-ruining sob. Even so, we should pause at the ready equation of sentimentalism as a literary mode with tearfulness as a particular materialization of sentiment, pivotal as it was. The question I want to ask here is this: if sentiment may be defined broadly, in the words of the *OED*, as "Personal experience, one's own feelings," why should sentimentalism, by virtue of its association with the novel, be equated primarily with the spectacle of crying? To frame the question from a slightly different angle, does the affective repertoire of what has been designated as sentimental abolitionism, in fact, warrant this narrow association?

It is worth noting that the *OED*'s definition for "sentimentalism"—the elaboration, we might say, of sentiment into a mode or perspective—earns the subsequent term a host of suspicions pertaining to matters of "excess." *Sentimentalism*'s opening entry reads: "The sentimental habit of mind; the disposition to attribute undue importance to sentimental considerations, or to be governed by sentiment in opposition to reason; the tendency to excessive indulgence in or insincere display of sentiment." On the one hand, we should note that the *OED* does not, therefore, reduce skepticism to the particular example of tearful sympathy solicited by narrative. There is reason to wonder, accordingly, despite the familiar associations of Stowe's novel, whether the



embarrassments of tearful pity are thus better understood as essentially metonymic for a grander stigmatization of feeling characteristic of Euro-American rationalisms. This argument finds a compelling articulation in Robert Solomon's *In Defense of Sentimentality*, which characterizes the "prejudice against sentimentality" as "an extension of that all-too-familiar contempt for the passions in Western literature and philosophy" (4). "Our disdain for sentimentality," Solomon contends, "is the rationalist's discomfort with any display of emotion, warranted as well as unwarranted, appropriate as well as inappropriate." For Solomon, the history of this skepticism may be traced ultimately to a moment contemporaneous with the timeline of the present dissertation: Immanuel Kant's departure from the moral sentiments advocated in the writings of David Hume and Adam Smith. Here, "the status of 'sentimentality' went into decline [among intellectuals, at least] about the same time that the sentiments lost their status in moral philosophy" (6).<sup>46</sup> Interestingly, Solomon suggests this Kantian move toward a reason at odds with "heartfelt feeling" followed unquestionably from sentimentalism's unfolding, gender-laden associations with the novel as a historical formation—as Solomon puts it, "against the flood of popular women writers in Europe and America" who had published and would continue to cultivate a market for fiction equating "virtue and goodness with gushing sentiment" (6). Solomon takes for his gusher *par excellence* Stowe's "much

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<sup>46</sup> Solomon sees this Kantian perspective as essentially constitutive of contemporary cynicism regarding the virtues of sentimentalism. Ventriloquizing the perspective further, Solomon explains, "Rational principles are universal. Feelings are too often particular and personal. Rational principles are 'objective' and admit of argument and demonstration. Mere feelings are wholly 'subjective'...and (supposedly) not vulnerable to logic. Rational principles are (unlike love) truly forever, while feelings are capricious and come and go. Rationality is by its nature unemotional and disinterested. The sentiments as emotions are not only interested but absorbed, caught up in the circumstances and incapable of unbiased judgment" (5). These clumsy binaries comprise the misconceptions to which Solomon directs his "Defense of Sentimentality" (Oxford UP, 2004).

demeaned” *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*—potentially, he goes on to note, “the most politically influential book in postcolonial American history” (7). Yet even Solomon, in his manifesto against the distrust of sentiment writ large, shows awareness that the associations of sentimentalism have stuck steadfastly to certain affective forms and signifiers in particular. Stuck is, perhaps, the best word for the cluster of feelings I mean to denote—these are the stickier kinds, the saccharine and cloying indulgences of an identification at once heart-rending and, in its conspicuous predictabilities, overly sweet.

Rather than repackaging Solomon’s full-scale recovery of sentimentalism, as a corrective to the cynicism he associates with modern scholarship, this chapter intends to question why we have associated the pinnacle of the tradition so consistently with *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and whether this association has had the effect of occluding the complexities of abolitionist affect by way of caricature. In *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality* (2008), Lauren Berlant articulates a trenchant critique of sentimentalism that may help us get at this question from both sides, which is to say via caricature, but then also with terms by which that caricature may be undone. On the one hand, citing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as the classic example of a tradition traceable from the twenty-first century to the 1830s, Berlant admits sentimentalism is a powerful mode. “[I]n its imaginary,” Berlant explains, “crises of the heart and of the body’s dignity produce events that can topple great nations and other patriarchal institutions if an effective and redemptive linkage can be constructed between the privileged and the socially abject” (40). Addressing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, in particular, Berlant observes further that the “novel’s very citation is a sign that an aesthetic work can be so powerful as to transform the privileged people who read it into identifying against the ways they

understand their own interests.” At the same time, Berlant makes it her main point that this counterintuitive work of “identifying” against one’s apparent “interests” does not go far enough. The problem *The Female Complaint* elaborates is that this power of sentimentalism does not guarantee, or even encourage, an actual transformation of positionalities. Rather, for Berlant, sentimentalism invites one to indulge in fantasies of redemptive identification, without paving any clear path for those fantasies to modify the present.

My analysis of antislavery newspapers below will suggest, in part, that abolitionists began to perceive in the rhetoric around colorphobia something analogous to the fantasy of identification Berlant urges us to interrogate. Before turning to this resonant skepticism, however, I want to think through the apparent pitfalls of sentimentalism a bit further. One of the larger questions Berlant raises is why, and how, sentimentalism fails to follow through on its promises. One of the less self-evident elements of her argument is whether sentimentalism fails because it approaches politics by way of an emphasis on *feeling*, writ large, or because it emphasizes, rather, the wrong kinds of feeling. In one passage, Berlant explains that “the forces of distortion in the world of feeling politics that the citation of *Uncle Tom* puts into play are as likely to justify ongoing forms of domination as they are to give form and language to impulses toward resistance” (40-1). Here, Berlant seems to suggest a structural crisis intrinsic to the distortive effects of “feeling politics.” Elsewhere, however, Berlant gestures to possibilities of feeling differently. Berlant describes these alternative modes as “countersentimental,” defined as a “resistant strain within the sentimental domain,” by which texts “refus[e] to reproduce the sublimation of subaltern struggles into conventions

of emotional satisfaction and redemptive fantasy” (55). While somewhat resistant to specifying the affective valences facilitated by this strain, Berlant contends that “Countersentimental narratives are lacerated by *ambivalence* [my emph.]”—which is to say, a less certain, yet no less thoughtful exploration of where one’s political realities might intersect with possibilities of affective transformation.

The historical question we might pose in light of Berlant’s distinction is where and how abolitionist networks may have endeavored to pursue a similar reversal, by which discourses of hegemonic sentimentality were confronted and unraveled by aberrant and experimental emotive modes. Recently, scholars have made efforts to redefine sentimentalism as a more capacious sphere of political interaction against the familiar clichés outlined above. Ramesh Mallipeddi’s *Spectacular Suffering*, for instance, observes that critiques of sentimentalism as a literary mode all too often take issue with the semantics of affective solicitation, without making room to acknowledge that for the enslaved and formerly enslaved, “sentimental melancholy,” whether expressed orally, in print, or otherwise, constituted a “historical counterknowledge” by which their suffering became known and shaped political action. To call attention to this neglect, Mallipeddi proposes that scholars need “to loosen the grip of ideological critique for us to engage more fully with sentimental mediations of slave suffering” (23). To dismiss cries for recognition as merely performative is to suspend the capacity to feel with the affective traces actively left by the disenfranchised and oppressed. Moreover, as the engagement with African American print culture below will show, quick dismissals of rhetorical scaffolding, sentimentalism included, obscure the intricacies that went into integrating

genuine affective experience into the politics of style, wordplay, and generic expectations.

Still other scholars have taken steps to integrate the affective turn to “ugly” or otherwise disturbing feelings with more nuanced understandings of abolitionist rhetorical strategy. In an argument resonant with the revisionary portrait of abolitionist sentiment this chapter draws in following, Kevin Pelletier has proposed that one of the most telling omissions in scholarly depictions of antislavery sentimentalism is the failure to engage with the role “fear” played in connecting a rhetoric of compassion to theological visions inflected by faith in a coming apocalypse. While these ideas may seem at first antithetical, Pelletier shows that compassion and apocalypse became intimately linked in the context of antebellum sentimentalism. In reconstructing this intimacy, Pelletier contends that nineteenth-century cultures of sentiment were marked by a “passionate investment in fear as an indispensable engine of cultural and political transformation” (3). Moreover, Pelletier observes that when novelists “could not depend on love to produce a sympathetic response in readers, fear often served as an incentive to love, energizing love’s power and underwriting its potential to convert Americans from fallible sinners into moral beings.” While the present chapter of this dissertation will focus greater attention on abolitionism’s adaptation of medical nomenclature, rather than theological anticipations, I will also endeavor to develop further the argument advanced by Pelletier that, in ignoring fear and other less pleasurable affects, critiques of sentimentalism have tended to rely on erecting a conspicuously artless strawman. In short, the contingencies abolitionists acknowledged and mobilized in order to advocate a politics of compassion were not merely complex; they also drew readers well outside their spheres of comfort,

into modes of identification that were also painful, unnerving, even dread-inducing. In short, rethinking abolitionist affect requires that we get beyond the conflation of sentiment with familiar caricatures of armchair sympathies. In exploring abolitionist literature at odds with phobia's burgeoning imbrication in a rhetoric of sympathy, we discover that the discourse around phobia provides a unique window into the question of how abolitionists understood the relationship between emotion and politics. Phobia signified not just a suspect means of intellectualizing, psychologizing, and naturalizing race prejudice. On the contrary, a renewed insistence on the satirical valences of phobia became, simultaneously, a familiar convention for cutting through these pitfalls.

#### **NEGROPHOBIA VS. NEGRO-EQUALITY-PHOBIA**

Interestingly, the satirical tone that had given phobia much of its early traction found new value at this juncture. For those who doubted phobia's apparent compatibility with a politics of sympathy, satire provided an alternative means of borrowing and repurposing phobia's cultural capital. An illustration by New York cartoonist Frank Bellew titled "A Consistent Negrophobist," published in *Harper's Weekly* on August 16, 1862 (Fig. 9), exemplifies this usage well through a parody of John Singleton Copley's painting *Watson and the Shark* (1778). Based on a notorious shark attack off the coast of Havana, Cuba, in 1749 (which claimed the right leg of the young British merchant, Brook Watson), Copley's painting displays a nude Watson reaching gracefully for a rope held by a well-dressed black sailor, while a toothy shark lunges toward Watson's head (Fig. 10). Reconfiguring this scene of rescue, Bellew turns the open palm and sublime repose of the nude youth into the limp wrist and panicky countenance of a drowning "Negrophobist," flailing underneath a muscular black man offering salvation by way of a dangling rope.

To accentuate the inversion, Bellew transfers the serene, classical posture of Copley's Watson to the black protagonist in his illustration, using the latter's outstretched arms, bent left leg, and flagged right foot to emphasize not any awful precariousness, but rather a vigorous athleticism.<sup>47</sup> The essence of Bellew's joke is clear: the dejected Negrophobist would rather die than come into proximity with the source of his fear, regardless of how kind and competent the hero appears. The rope gestures further toward a phallic dimension, implying that to receive help from a black savior would be too emasculating for the white man to endure. In making fun of the Negrophobist, however, the absurdity of the scene communicates a critique of Negrophobia, simultaneously, as an analytical frame. If the white gentleman indeed suffers from any such condition, Bellew indicates that the sufferer deserves what he gets. Bringing the humor of his demise into discomfiting proximity with the shame of his ignorance, the satirical edge of Bellew's image both capitalizes on and undermines Negrophobia's explanatory power.

In an analysis of black U.S. abolitionists who borrowed, reappropriated, and republished cartoons appearing in the British weekly *Punch*, Michael Chaney has

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<sup>47</sup> In an important essay on *Watson and the Shark*, Jennifer Roberts observes that Copley revised a tabletop motif he had used many times before, translating it in his Caribbean context to the surface of the sea. However, Roberts emphasizes further that the painting thus disturbs what had once served as a stable bifurcation between the seen and the unseen. Roberts explains that in *Watson and the Shark* "every operation of reflective impression, sensory synthesis, and focal attention that was standardized in the tabletop paintings is retracted in the painting. Where there were once unruffled tabletops that announced their capacity for retaining and regenerating precise impressions of reflection, there is now (occupying an equivalent portion of the canvas) a choppy and eerily unreflective sea that offers only, at best, displaced and distorted formal echoes" (689). This radical effect of the sea as a surface providing a stage for the action, while also possessing and obscuring the drama represented, may have piqued Bellew's interests further. Considering Negrophobia's ongoing analogy to hydrophobia, it may be a deliberate pun, for instance, that the predicament facing the white Negrophobist is his total immersion in water.

suggested that these images helped Douglass and others perform a “transformative visual satire.” Chaney argues further that the cartoons came to “function pedagogically as lessons in allegorical seeing,” through which caricature and humor could be used to “inaugurate[] states of emancipation both metaphorical and literal” (59). Written satire revolving around colorphobia continued to serve similar ends in antislavery print culture. Yet the satire of the terms also became compounded: the initial pun on rabies, having passed into euphemistic ubiquity, solicited trenchant parodies of the basic affective premise at its core. One of the most remarkable satirical pieces to critique phobia appeared in *The Liberator*, under the title “Negro-Phobia Vs. Negro-Equality-Phobia” in July 1862. Originally published by Charles Swift in the *Yarmouth Register* that same year, following the U.S. Senate’s resistance to recognizing Haiti and Liberia as independent governments, the article admits that “at first sight” such hesitation may seem indicative of “Negro-phobia.” However, the writer continues to argue otherwise:

If we consider the habits of these people [the dissenting Senators], we shall see that this cannot be the case. Why, sir, when these men were *little* babies, one-half of them were cared for by black women, and drew their sustenance from black breasts; their chosen companions were children from the negro quarters. When that spirit of despotism, which has produced the present rebellion, began to manifest itself, it was by mauling and knuckling negro boys. When the passions of young manhood began to fire their blood, they sought and found unholy gratification in overcoming the virtue of negro and mulatto girls....They have lived among negroes all their days. Their houses are full of them. They know not how to do



without them....Surely, these men cannot be afflicted with *this disease*. []

After some thought, I have concluded that their disease must be Negro-equality-phobia. (Sheva 1)

At the heart of the piece is a conviction that phobia cannot account for how slavery and American foreign policy operate materially. Far from betraying a debilitating phobia of color, slavery shows instead a system of violent intimacies. Dramatically collapsed in such intimacies are the distances phobia would appear to necessitate. And yet, rather than abandoning the concept, the author makes it new. The piece concludes that it would be more accurate to read prejudicial disregard for Haiti and Liberia as a phobia of equality itself—something akin, arguably, to a feeling Jacques Rancière has described as “hatred of democracy.”

As the article goes on, it becomes apparent that the author has become disenchanted with both the sympathy and the parabolical simplicity embedded in phobia’s diagnosis. “Negro-phobia must be an awful visitation,” the article goes on sardonically.

Think of the condition of one of these afflicted ones, should he chance to meet a black man who weighed as many pounds, could run as fast, jump as high, fight as well, was as brave, dressed as well, was as rich, owned as many slaves, was as talented, as well educated, as refined, as moral, as high in office as himself. Poor man!....What is to be done?....Don’t you pity him? It is no use. There is no help for him. (1)

Recasting the peril of Negrophobia through sarcasm, the passage shows that by the time of the war phobia had become a platform on which debates over sympathy were actively

and repeatedly staged. In picturing a white man facing his mirror image in a black man, the article tackles, moreover, the imaginative work phobia facilitated. Depicting phobia as a disingenuous parable of whiteness, where anti-black violence becomes legitimated by an insecurity at its core, the author exposes the apologies phobia was being used to serve.

A poem titled “Colorphobia” published under the alias “Hezekiah Humankind” by *The Liberator* in 1849 shows how dissatisfaction of the kind expressed in “Negro-Phobia Vs. Negro-Equality-Phobia” could become an occasion for extended literary meditation. To give the full effect of the poem, it will be worth quoting it in its entirety:

I.

The *Colorphobia*—what is that?  
Does it infect the dog or cat?  
Does the disease prove fatal ever?  
Or is it but a skin deep fever?

II.

The turkey-cock, I’ve heard it said,  
A deep aversion has to red;  
O, stupid bird! O, silly biped!  
OUR COUNTRY’S FLAG *with red is striped!*

III.

This Colorphobia—as they name it—  
So mean that very few will claim it—  
While it remains above the sod,

Should never curse the 'church of God'!

IV.

'Tis not the color gives offence;

They only say so for pretence;

Care they a fig how black the face?

No—if *the 'nigger' 'keep his place.'*

V.

Would ye be just? mind not complexion;

Black through the skin, 'tis no objection;

Mind not the color, all else right;

*A man's a MAN, or black or white.*

VI.

This is the thought that stirs their gall,—

That colored men are MEN *at all*;

And fix the thing the best you can,

'Tis not the *color*, but the MAN. (Fig. 11)

What is perhaps most telling in the poem, is the way it at once commits to investigating the stranglehold of colorphobia, devoting the first stanza to a string of interrogatives, only to undermine the seriousness of the diagnosis simultaneously. Skepticism as to the accuracy of the diagnosis pervades the poem: like the turkey invoked by stanza two, the logic of colorphobia is deemed “silly” and “stupid”—a rhetorical turn that seems to offer little more than a clever “name,” which, of course, no sufferer is likely to “claim.” By the fourth stanza, the poet arrives at a full rebuttal of the state in question: “‘Tis not the color

gives offence;/They only say so for pretence.” The question arises: why should the poet pursue the subject at all, if his point is that colorphobia’s really a red herring? While the satirical turn motivating the poem may seem intuitive enough, we should note that, in fact, here and elsewhere a rather complex formulation is in play. In effect, the poem “Colorphobia” mobilizes a politics of affect by stringing together a sophisticated sequence of negations. While the first negation lies in the concept of colorphobia itself—which is to say an affect driven by a negation of color—the author invokes this negation in the vein of an antiphobic corrective, for the sake of then casting doubt on the validity of the affective category as an assessment of white supremacy. Here, as in the article “Negro-Phobia Vs. Negro-Equality-Phobia,” this sequence of negative invocations brings Humankind’s reader to a critical problematic—the question of whether phobia, or even skin color as an agential force, can be said to play a great part in the maintenance of racial inequality. The poet’s conclusion is that phobia may be better understood as a decoy narrative, distracting from a concerted effort by white Americans to maintain social dominance by fabricating boundaries of humanness along racial lines.

Before concluding this section, it is important to note that satirizations of colorphobia in the antebellum period emanated also from the term’s aspiration to a diagnostic sensibility. Thus, others who took issue with the rhetoric of colorphobia did so less because it imported pity into the equation than because it relied heavily on a vocabulary evocative of pathology, picturing one party as ill and the other salubriously self-aware. One of the most interesting articles to mediate on these grounds was a piece by Henry Ward Beecher titled “Parker-Phobia,” regarding escalating conflict over the radical abolitionism espoused by Theodore Parker, reverend of Boston’s 7,000-member

Congregational Society. With an interest in defusing anti-Parker hostility, Beecher insists, “Theodore Parker is not worth all the fuss that is made about him.” Attempting a more nuanced perspective, he contends that Parker’s integrity, or lack thereof, will be revealed in time: “Now if he be a hypocrite, he may well be troubled by the snarling and barking he causes,” whereas, “if he is a true worshiper of *his* trinity, Calumny cannot sting him nor personal defenses shelter him” (186). However, rather than pursuing this line of inquiry at length, Beecher turns to implicate the rhetoric of phobia itself, launching an attack on the political radicals Parker has been taken to represent:

These men....detect glaring inconsistencies, hypocrisy, cant, slavery to usage, dogma and superstition. They study morbid anatomy. They exult when they have cut round and cut open, and brought to view a loathsome ulcer. They multiply words over it, and defile every healthful part with the pollutions of the local disease—and then cry out, Abomination! destroy! destroy!

Beecher’s position seems to be that a form of critique has emerged that weds itself too readily to a privileged discourse of medical diagnosis—what Michel Foucault famously calls, in *The Birth of the Clinic*, the “sovereignty” of a “clinical gaze” (*regard médical*). Appropriating this diagnostic sovereignty in scenes of political debate, the demagogues Beecher conjures mandate that any disease of feeling they detect be exterminated. At the same time, Beecher’s title performs, however parodically, this same rhetorical move, framing the commotion around Parker as a highly particular, interpersonal phobia. Ultimately, by playing both sides, Beecher comes close to emptying phobia of any

analytical coherence whatsoever, treating the concept more like a shortcut to a familiar pun, as opposed to any genuine affect poisoning political debate.

### THE LIMITS OF PITY, THE GOBLIN GROWTH OF DREAD

Satire was not the only way in, however. Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* indicates that she too became skeptical of phobia's ascendancy as a sociopolitical diagnostic. Yet *Dred* offers an intricately nuanced perspective, presenting to readers neither approval of a rhetorical convention, nor explicit disapproval, but rather an alternative take on fear's value as a political feeling. The novel begins with the drama of a conventional marriage plot, sewing seeds of romantic interest between two white North Carolina slaveholders, Nina Gordon and Edward Clayton, who become enamored with one another, in part, due to their slowly deepening commitments to antislavery. However, as the narrative proceeds, this plot quickly unravels and a second erupts in its place: Nina dies of cholera, and a new protagonist, Dred, surfaces from the swamp. From here, Stowe launches an exercise in speculative history telling. The mysterious protagonist, readers discover, is the son of the historical black insurrectionist Denmark Vesey, famously tried and executed for plotting a slave rebellion in Charleston, South Carolina in 1822. As Robert Levine notes, Stowe presents Dred as an heir to this revolutionary vision, depicting "Vesey and his accomplices as patriots who were inspired by their reading of the Declaration of Independence and the Bible to enact their own revolution against despotic authority" (xxi).<sup>48</sup> In the wake of his father's death, Dred slays a plantation overseer in a brawl and takes refuge in the swamp. As soon as he

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<sup>48</sup> Sarah Hartshorne suggests similarly that Dred personifies a "spirit of revenge," comprising not just the possibility of slave revolt, but also "the certainty of the revenge of the Lord on a sinful people" (288).

is introduced in the novel, Dred swiftly overtakes all lingering plot lines. Lawrence Buell has perhaps described his presence best: “As a Mandingo shaman’s grandson gifted with second sight, as Denmark Vesey’s lost son and spiritual kin to Nat Turner,” as “a maroon chief of titanic strength, formidable intelligence, and irresistible eloquence who can bring a whole community . . . to its knees as an unseen voice prophesying judgment from the treetops,” Dred “is a southern white’s nightmare embodiment of black insurgency” (241). Though Dred dies tragically toward the novel’s conclusion, his prophecies endure, heralding imminent crisis. As Levine contends, *Dred* essentially “anticipates, promotes, and helps to supply the terms for understanding the bloodshed of the coming Civil War” (xxx).

I will return to this “nightmarish” significance of Dred’s character momentarily. First, however, it is important to establish the nature of Stowe’s allusions to the rhetoric around racial phobia. Gail Smith has shown that *Dred* participates in “hermeneutic debates” of its day, investigating the means by which interpretive communities cohere (289, 90). This interest extends to the affective parameters erected by antislavery rhetoric, the rhetoric around colorphobia included. Nevertheless, when the novel shows signs of phobia, it does so circuitously, by way of brief comparisons between proslavery affect and rabies. In an early instance, Stowe uses the comparison to introduce readers to Tom Gordon, the novel’s primary villain. A foil to the fantasy of benevolent slavery, personified in Tom’s compassionate but naïve sister Nina, Tom returns to the family estate, left to both siblings by their deceased parents, with a snarling disposition. Described as “sitting down doggedly” and “spitting a quid of tobacco” at his aunt Miss Nesbit’s feet, he instills a sense of panic in everyone present for the homecoming (Vol. 1,

163). Miss Nesbit, readers learn, “sat with her feet drawn up on the sofa, as if he had been a mad dog.” Memories of “furious domestic hurricanes,” unleashed by Tom on previous occasions, return all at once to Nina and Miss Nesbit. Nina, in particular, recalls “the storms of oaths and curses that had terrified her when a child; the times that she had seen her father looking like death, leaning his head on his hand, and sighing as only those sigh who have an only son worse than dead” (Vol. 1, 163). Tom, the narrator implies, is a lost cause: a living casualty of the slave system, corrupted beyond repair.

A second allusion is made via Edward Clayton, who, in the wake of Nina’s untimely death, develops more progressive abolitionist views. The moment finds Clayton in conversation with family following his decision to quit work as a lawyer, in order to devote more time to the antislavery cause. His mother asks whether “it would not have been better” to have “insinuated your opinions more gradually,” considering the “prejudice against abolitionists.” Once again, Stowe uses the rabies analogy to characterize proslavery affect. “I suspect,” Clayton explains, “there are multitudes now in every part of our state who are kept from expressing what they really think, and doing what they ought to do by this fear. Somebody must brave this mad-dog cry—somebody must be willing to be odious” (Vol. 2, 150). Here, rather than using the analogy to theorize racial bigotry, Stowe indicates that a prejudicial madness has selected for its target abolitionists themselves. If fear enters into the equation, it does so in conjunction with this anti-abolitionism, spreading through “multitudes” who might in a different context express solidarity with the antislavery cause.

Only through a third allusion, however, do we begin to get a sense of what Stowe might have intended by avoiding phobia as a rhetorical touchstone. The moment finds



Frank Russell, another lawyer, warning Clayton that his abolitionism is earning him a great number of enemies. He explains, “You have made some remarks...that have started a mad-dog cry” (Vol. 2, 240). Russell then hands Clayton an article titled “Covert Abolitionism! Citizens, Beware!” It reads:

We were present, a few evenings ago, at the closing speech delivered before the Washington Agricultural Society, in the course of which the speaker, Mr. Edward Clayton, gratuitously wandered away from his subject to make inflammatory and seditious comments on the state of the laws which regulate our negro population....This young man is supposed to be infected with the virus of Northern abolitionists. (Vol. 2, 240-1)

Offering an imitation of proslavery editorials, Stowe depicts the rhetoric of viral infection as a protean conceit, capable of furnishing an array of contradictory arguments. In so doing, she draws on what had indeed become a robust strain of diagnostic rhetoric hurled from the South. Answering the rhetoric of Negrophobia, many cited the influence of a pervasive “Negrophilism” among abolitionists.<sup>49</sup> An article published in *Putnam’s Monthly* in 1854 even describes this Negrophilism as a condition of conscious malingering, whereby “Abolition Munchausens” were dedicating “their imaginations and their energies to the concoction and extensive circulation in the North of the grossest misrepresentations of the Southern people” (638). Interestingly, Stowe’s use of the term “virus” suggests, all the more, that she means to convey a proslavery inversion of the

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<sup>49</sup> For other examples see “Civil Liberty and Self-Government,” published in *The Southern Quarterly Review* in April 1854; “The Present Aspect of Abolitionism,” published in *The Southern and Western Literary Messenger and Review*, in July 1847; and “The Want of Laborers,” published in the *American Artisan and Patent Record* in June 1865.

hydrophobia analogy. A concept not yet associated with microbiology (as it would be after physicians discovered viruses to be a unique class of microscopic agents in the 1890s), the word virus was cited in relation to just a handful diseases in the preceding decades. Among these was hydrophobia, in which case the term “virus” was used to designate vaguely infectious matter consisting in saliva that had become “venomous.” In translating the medical metaphor to proslavery, Stowe indicates that, whatever its intentions, vernacular imitations of medical nomenclature function not so much as a rhetorical mode through which diseased politics are isolated for treatment, but rather performative utterances of epistemological certainty, adaptable for any number of oppositional purposes.

For Stowe, this ready adaptability revealed an inherent weakness in relying too heavily on a diagnostic lexicon for political critique. But the critique goes further still. Throughout *Dred*, Stowe indicates that something important gets lost when political movements begin to revolve around pathologization. As an alternative, Stowe allows something like a politics of partial insanity to fester in the eponymous character Dred. In a chapter titled “Life in the Swamps,” Stowe explains: “There is a twilight-ground between the boundaries of the sane and insane, which the old Greeks and Romans regarded with a peculiar veneration” (Vol. 2, 5). In the next paragraph, she continues,

The hot and positive light of our modern materialism, which exhales from the growth of our existence every dewdrop, which searches out and dries every rivulet of romance, which sends an unsparing beam into every cool grotto of poetic possibility, withering the moss, and turning the dropping cave to a dusty den—this spirit, so remorseless, allows us no such

indefinite land. There are but two words in the whole department of modern anthropology—the sane and the insane; the latter dismissed from human reckoning almost with contempt. (Vol. 2, 5)

In opposition to this spirit of contempt, Stowe opens up possibilities for abolitionism to run, at least partially, mad. Within this “twilight-ground,” Dred begins to prophesy insurrection. Crying out for divine intervention, he shouts, “Avenge the innocent blood! Cast forth thine arrows, and slay them! Shoot out thy lightnings, and destroy them!” (Vol. 2, 9). While Dred’s significance has been the subject of much debate—Eric Sundquist observes, for instance, that Dred is inspired by the great insurrectionist Nat Turner, yet disappointingly “fail[s] to reneact [Turner’s] dangerous revolt” (Sundquist 199)—these prophecies repeatedly anticipate “an awful coming day” (Stowe Vol. 2, 9). Stowe indicates through Dred that to begin a rebellion one must possess some degree of a state the “modern materialists” call insanity. Thus, new light is cast on the chiasmic inversion offered by Clayton: “Somebody must brave this mad-dog cry—somebody must be willing to be odious.”

Justine Murison has argued convincingly that Stowe demonstrates familiarity with psychological theories of her day, especially those focusing on “nervousness” and nervous “susceptibility,” as they intersected with perceptions of Christian revivalism and its emphasis on “ecstasy, rapture, and enthusiasm” (108). Murison suggests, moreover, that this may help scholars articulate how *Dred* departs from the now iconic sentimentalism of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Noting that *Dred* tends to be characterized as the more “militant” of the two, while nevertheless failing to be militant enough, Murison contends that to interpret the novel, finally, as a “‘fall’ back into sentimentality” obscures

the way Stowe appropriates “nervous states” as sites for radical political transformation (125). Murison maintains that *Dred* “borrows heartily from the medical explanations of revivalism,” while at the same time “reject[ing] the belief that any nervousness sparked by revivalism must be pathological” (109). In exploring Stowe’s use of a hydrophobia analogy without reference to colorphobia, I would add that *Dred* interrogates not merely a pathologization of political affect but also the reduction of political debate to medical or pseudo-medical nomenclature. Nervous feeling becomes useful to Stowe only insofar as it resists the rhetorical pitfalls of a clinical epistemology.

However, *Dred* also departs from Stowe’s earlier work by investing in an affective locus averse to anything like lachrymose sentimentalism. Readers find that Stowe has no interest in expunging phobia from an abolitionist imaginary absolutely. On the contrary, the novel begins to revolve largely around aestheticizing phobia’s closest antebellum synonym: the feeling of “dread,” used repeatedly in case studies of hydrophobia to describe the telltale aversion to fluids.<sup>50</sup> Throughout *Dred*, Stowe indicates that fear of a certain magnitude is essential to Dred’s revolutionary vision. Citing Nat Turner’s rebellion explicitly as evidence of the necessity of militant force, Dred cries out to Nina and Tom’s enslaved half-brother Harry: “What if we do die? What great matter is that?....Nat Turner—they killed him; but the fear of him almost drove them to set free their slaves!” (Vol. 2, 89). Emphasizing the vitality of fear to Turner’s revolt, Dred goes on, “A little more fear, and they would have done it.” Just after this

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<sup>50</sup> As demonstrated above, the word *dread* was also used repeatedly in the literature on colorphobia and Negrophobia. For an early example, see an article titled “Colorphobia,” published in the *Pennsylvania Freeman* in 1839, which observes, “This newly coined word has recently been introduced, as most words are, by being needed. It signifies *dread of color*, as applied to the human species” (1).

moment, Dred passes into a semi-unconscious state, as though seized by divine prophecy: “Behold, it cometh! Behold the slain of the Lord shall be many!” Alarmed, Harry intervenes, “Dred! Dred! Dred!...come out of this—come out! It’s frightful!” (Vol. 2, 90). Yet the novel descends ever deeper into Dred’s prophetic consciousness—a mind the narrator later describes as so exceptional it beckoned serious “psychological study” (Vol. 2, 291). Far from finding any relief from Dred’s “frightful” revelations, we discover that the terror Dred fosters is exactly where Stowe intends to keep us.

In this sense, Stowe reverses the scene abolitionists repeatedly summoned in the appeal to colorphobia: rather than citing phobia as an exemplary feeling constitutive of proslavery, Stowe imagines her protagonist as a living personification of dread, an affective vessel foretelling imminent slave rebellion.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, in shifting the terms of phobia’s political uses, *Dred* also irreparably disturbs the usual boundaries of the case study form phobia had been used to invoke. This disturbance comes through most explicitly in a passage linking Dred’s mind to the swamp he has made his home. “It is difficult to fathom,” the narrator observes, “the dark recesses of a mind so powerful and active as his, placed under a pressure of ignorance and social disability so tremendous” (Vol. 2, 274). Comparing these dark recesses to the Dismal Swamp, Stowe continues,

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<sup>51</sup> As Lynn Veach Sadler notes, the novel’s title appears to have been *Dread* originally, spelled with an “a.” Inspired by one of Nat Turner’s conspirators, Stowe eventually changed the title to *Dred*. As Levine notes, the timing is a bit off for Stowe to have named the character after Dred Scott (an idea multiple critics have offered), since the novel was published six months before the Supreme Court reached its decision in March 1857, concluding “that African Americans had no legal rights in the United States and could never become citizens” (xiv). Levine writes further, “Though it seems unlikely that Stowe named her black revolutionary hero after Dred Scott...the fact is that the case began to be heard in the Supreme Court in early 1856, and there is much in Stowe’s prescient second novel that looks forward to these ominous developments of 1857” (xiv). As demonstrated above, Stowe found the name’s homonymic connection to the feeling of dread equally useful to her novel’s ambitions.

“The wild, dreary belt of swamp-land which girds in those states scathed by the fires of despotism is an apt emblem...of that darkly struggling, wildly vegetating swamp of human souls, cut off, like it, from the usages and improvements of cultivated life” (Vol. 2, 274-5). A passage that may seem, at first, vaguely patronizing, it opens onto an active theorization of “social disability” as a political resource. Readers are invited to interpret Dred and the Dismal Swamp as enmeshed figures, symbolic of the psychology of enslavement, aspiring by virtue of their shared seclusion to a kind of allegory circumscribed within the novel. At the same time, the passage elsewhere pierces through the confines that would keep Dred and his swampy allegory safely contained. Elaborating on the aptness of the wetlands metaphor, Stowe’s narrator explains that the tendrils of Dred’s ecological surroundings run rampant: “In those desolate regions which he made his habitation, it is said that trees often, from the singularly unnatural and wildly stimulating properties of the slimy depths from which they spring, assume a goblin growth,” while underneath, “[a]ll sorts of vegetable monsters stretch their weird, fantastic forms” (Vol. 2, 274). Juxtaposing the ecological with her interest in political feeling, Stowe goes on:

There is no principle so awful through all nature as the principle of *growth*. It is a mysterious and dread condition of existence, which, place it under what impediment or disadvantage you will, is constantly forcing on; and when unnatural pressure hinders it, develops in forms portentous and astonishing. (Vol. 2, 274)

Here Stowe situates the goblin growth of swamp life not merely as analogous to the state of mind fostered by slavery but as indicative of a common biological phenomenon—a

“dread condition of existence.” This dread condition of existence gestures to a theory of biological irrepressibility: even in states of subjugation, life *grows*. In this defiant perseverance of subjugated life, organisms naturally take on a dreadful aspect—an affective presence that can be neither assuaged nor contained. Rather, life keeps encroaching, like so much congested swamp matter, on the solipsistic plots of the dominant order. In this way, Stowe liberates Dred’s significance in the novel from what might otherwise turn into an oversimplified relationship between the particular and the universal, the exemplary and the exemplified—which is to say, the hallmark of a case study epistemology.<sup>52</sup> Stowe pictures in its place a spreading, mutating dread, irreducible to any allegorical personage. Describing its course of movement under slavery’s despotism, she puts it still more explicitly: “Beneath that fearful pressure, souls whose energy, well-directed, might have blessed mankind, start out in preternatural and fearful developments, whose strength is only a portent of dread” (Vol. 2, 275). In such scenes, a psychology of revolutionary dread grows lush, without recourse to taxonomy or the familiar confines of the medical case form.

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<sup>52</sup> This also necessarily changes the relationship between the swamplands and the legal sphere Dred and his allies reject. In a compelling reading of *Dred*, Katherine Henry argues that Stowe emphasizes a “tension between the courtroom and the swamp, each one bringing into relief what is lacking in the other, and each one representing the other’s desire” (51). Thus, “If the swamp lacks the legal protections and legal legitimacy of the courtroom, the courtroom lacks the compassion and the capacity for human empathy of the swamp.” As this tension solidifies and the two become “mutually exclusive,” “the chance of a peaceful resolution to the problem of slavery is severely diminished” (51). Compelling as this reading is, I would argue that only the white Southerners of *Dred* enjoy the false security of seeing the two worlds as incommensurable. Rather than reading one as exterior to the other, I believe Stowe’s emphasis on the goblin growth of swamp life positions a burgeoning slave revolt as rapidly encroaching on the mechanisms of an unjust state.

## CONCLUSION

While *Dred* makes use of both the hydrophobia analogy and a psychology of dread, then, Stowe thus succeeds in disarticulating what each will signify. Throughout the novel, this disarticulation is motivated by a resistance to the rhetoric of insanity, by which good politics are mapped onto either normative psychologies or safe affective conventions. As to why Stowe chose to preserve the hydrophobia analogy at all, one additional reason might have been the well-known fact that slavery had not merely acquired a likeness to vicious dogs: rather, the slave system had, for the purpose of catching escaped slaves, notoriously trained dogs to be a part of its daily operations. In fact, *Dred* focuses extensively on the use of hunting dogs for these purposes, a practice accelerated by the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which, in turn, became widely known as the Bloodhound Act. In one instance, readers find Dred kneeling over a body covered in blood. The narrator explains, “[A] party of negro-hunters, with dogs and guns, had chased this man....He succeeded in outrunning all but one dog, which sprang up, and fastening his fangs in his throat, laid him prostrate...Dred came up in time to kill the dog, but the wound, as appeared, had proved a mortal one” (218). While the dog described here was not, as far as we can tell, hydrophobic, the moment gives readers a sense of why Stowe continued to find the analogy to mad dogs valuable, even as she avoided the rhetoric of phobia that gave the analogy popular appeal. As the danger of violent dogs had long been associated with the specter of rabies, Stowe brings the analogy into proximity with the material world she depicts. In doing so, Stowe emphasizes, over and above the epistemological designs of diagnosis, what we might call a mad romance of likenesses: a “world,” she explains in a subsequent chapter, “where all things are



symbolic, bound together by mystical resemblances, and where one event is the archetype of thousands” (408).

Stowe associated this infinite interplay of resemblances with a resistance to the precision of taxonomic nomenclature. To have crystallized the metaphor as diagnosis would have meant risking the dissolution of the allegory itself—to sacrifice an aesthetic premised on ever-shifting archetypal reciprocities for the weak satisfaction of designating illness. To exemplify what Stowe would have considered an ideal meditation on the hydrophobia metaphor in these terms, it may be worth looking briefly to another contemporary, who appears to have perceived the value of the metaphor similarly. In an entry in his *Journal* recorded November 29, 1853,<sup>53</sup> Henry David Thoreau recounts a story Stowe would have found compelling. Recollecting a conversation with his friend George Minott, Thoreau tells of a dog who once tore through the region surrounding Concord, afflicted with “hydrophobia,” while Minott was living at the place Nathaniel Hawthorne inhabited at the date of the entry. Minott recalls first hearing some commotion outside, then discovering upon investigation that a couple of men were “punching at a strange dog” with long poles under a barn (522). At last, the dog escaped into an adjacent yard, where he drove two turkeys into a corner, “bit off the head of one,” then raced into a nearby meadow with its body (523). Several persons followed, crying “Mad dog” as a warning. A neighbor named Harry Hooper nevertheless failed to perceive the coming danger. The dog “leaped right upon his open breast and made a pass at his throat,” barely missing it. Minott shouted, “Why, you’re crazy, Harry; if he’d ‘a’ bitten ye, ‘t would ‘a’ killed ye.” The subject of the next encounter, a man named Fay, would not be so lucky.

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<sup>53</sup> For a collection of Thoreau’s writings on dogs, see: *Bonds of Affection: Thoreau on Dogs and Cats* (2005).

The dog caught Fay at his left leg, bit him again in his right, then raced off again. By sundown it had bitten two cows, which soon after “died of hydrophobia” (524). He then attacked a goose. By midnight, the dog had reached the location of Thoreau’s friend Cato, a well-known free black resident of Concord to whom Thoreau famously refers in *Walden* and the *Journal* as “Black Cato.”<sup>54</sup> Cato attacked and stunned the dog in that meeting, then departed, assuming it was dead. The next morning, while chopping wood, Cato found the dog still alive, “rear[ing] up at him once more” (525). After a brief standoff, Cato picked up a large stone and delivered a blow that finally killed it. “[L]est, he should run away again,” Thoreau writes, “[Cato] cut off his head and threw both head and body into the river.”<sup>55</sup> A story possessing uncanny parallels with Stowe’s scene in *Dred*, the entry takes on new significance in light of the archive recovered in this study. Thoreau does not gesture explicitly to the possibility that Cato’s battle with the mad dog may serve as a kind of parable, prefiguring violent national conflict, yet for this reason Stowe might have considered the narrative a perfect exemplar of her aesthetic vision. Thoreau’s uncanny parallels with the rhetoric of racial phobia, appearing in antislavery writing with which he was well familiar, offer a fitting permutation of what Stowe calls a world of “mystical resemblances,” where prophecy is understood to inhere in a ubiquity of likenesses. In this cosmology—resonant with the historical mode Walter Benjamin

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<sup>54</sup> For an excellent study devoted to Cato and other African American residents of Concord, see Elise Lemire’s *Black Walden: Slavery and Its Aftermath in Concord, Massachusetts* (2009).

<sup>55</sup> As for Fay, a physician named Dr. Heywood immediately “cut out the mangled flesh and made various applications.” Fay “cried like a baby,” but hydrophobia never came of the injury (525). While this essay is not particularly concerned with the issue of treatment, it is worth noting that reports of successfully treated cases were common during the period, even as a number of major physicians considered the possibility of curing rabid hydrophobia almost completely impossible.

terms “constellation”—“all things are symbolic”: thus, any event has the capacity to stir archetypal reverberations “with thousands” of others.

At the beginning of the last chapter, I stated that, in tracing this philological tradition in antislavery, I would do so with an interest in its connections to a deeper genealogy, this being the ubiquity of phobia’s rhetoric in progressive movements of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. To conclude, I thus want to explore some of the continuities and disparities characterizing the evolution of phobia’s cultural capital—and skepticism about that cultural capital—over time. Since the antebellum iterations traced over the last two chapters, applications of phobia as a category of social analysis have continued to provoke controversy. In November 2012, the Associated Press went so far as to place a ban on using the terms homophobia and Islamophobia in print. Revisions to the AP Stylebook explained that phobia implies “uncontrollable fear, often a form of mental illness” and that its usage “in political or social contexts” should therefore be discouraged. Contacted by *Politico Magazine*, AP Deputy Standards Editor Dave Minthorn clarified further that the issue was one of exactitude. “Homophobia especially,” he explained. “It seems inaccurate. Instead, we would use something more neutral: anti-gay, or some such, if we had reason to believe that was the case” (Byers). When a number of news organizations weighed in, many claiming the AP was merely “afraid” of “picking sides” (Aravosis), the AP insisted their motives could be boiled down to diction. Minthorn clarified further, “We want to be precise and accurate and neutral in our phrasing.”

The AP controversy speaks to an anomalous development in vocabularies used to address systemic oppression, a partial history of which I have aimed to offer here.

Belonging to a lexicon that relies mostly on –isms (e.g. racism; ethnocentrism), or prefixes conveying negation like anti- (e.g. anti-Semitism) or mis- (e.g. misogyny), phobia stands conspicuously apart. Not only do terms like colorphobia, Negrophobia, and their successors designate a subject, object, or sphere of prejudice; they specify, in addition, an affective source at the root of prejudice. While adjacent prefixes and suffixes may, in line with phobia, connote common affective registers like hate, aversion, or aggression, phobia remains the only major suffix to implicate, etymologically, a feeling as precise as fear, and not just fear, but a form of fear that exceeds reason to the point of pathology. If collective opposition to phobia took shape as a nascent structure of feeling in the antebellum period, we might conclude that it has since come into sharper relief, approaching something like a worldview or ideology.

At the same time, important differences exist between the logic of the AP ban and abolitionist critique. Far from promoting neutrality, or what we might describe as a fetishized etymological purity, divested of affective weight, abolitionists interrogated the political implications of a hermeneutic premised on pathological fear. For some, doubts revolved around the solicitation of pity, implicit in the portrait of a diseased mental state. Elsewhere, resistance gestured to phobia's dependence on a diagnostic hegemony casting its "unsparing beam" within every "cool grotto" of representational possibility. Taking both challenges together, the dilemma phobia crystallized was how to bring a psychological perspective to bear on the question of slavery, without oversimplifying slavery's emotional scaffolding. For Stowe, the answer lay in reinventing the very affects antislavery writers had begun scapegoating, to imagine how aberrant and revolting psychologies might play a role in upending established relational modes.

As noted in the previous chapter, one of the dangers in the rhetoric of racial phobia was its easy consolidation into euphemism. What is perhaps most interesting about the antislavery literature explored above is that even as phobia began to undergo a kind of lexical sedimentation, we find simultaneously that a resistance to this decay into monotony kept resurfacing: an insistence on reactivating phobia's critical charge through ever-compounding satire—or, in Stowe's case, the allegorical play of a homonymic synonym personified. Indeed, in their mutual resistance to phobia's fossilization, the representational strategies we find in Douglass's *The North Star*, Bellew's "A Consistent Negrophobist," Stowe's *Dred*, and elsewhere share a notable affinity. This affinity has something to do with the distance between the perceived emotion that had activated a new affective emphasis in antislavery circles—i.e. the colorphobia against which an antiphobic imagination had been mobilized—and the *tone(s)* with which certain abolitionists had engaged its rhetorical force. In her book *Ugly Feelings*, Sianne Ngai defines tone as a "global and hyperrelational concept of *feeling* that encompasses attitude: a literary text's affective bearing, orientation, or 'set toward' its audience and world" (43). As an object of literary study, tone reminds us, that is, that regardless of whether a text identifies, unpacks, or otherwise investigates a particular affective phenomenon, it points readers, moreover, toward particular modes of feeling by virtue of its tone. In the case of a discourse that takes a particular psychological quandary for its target, in other words, a readership's engagement with that psychological concept will always be at least doubly complex. In the example of colorphobia, we encounter what I have described above as a dynamic emotive assemblage, in which the specification of irrational fear is only part of the story—a story outfitted across antislavery newspapers with metaphor,

satire, and genre properties borrowed from a medical case formalism. Abolitionists such as Douglass, Bellew, and Stowe complicate this relationship still further by summoning phobia with an air of sarcasm or other unpredictable motive. In this, they share something in common with what Ngai has identified as the rhetorical power of indirect tonality. In a reading of Herman Melville's *The Confidence-Man*, Ngai explains that "Melville's strategy" in using his novel to critique Wall Street is "not" to "plead more loudly for emotional attention," but "rather" to resist any such heavy-handed method. In its place, Melville withholds overt tonal instruction, yet he does so to such an extent that "the response the novel produces...becomes, in spite of its negative status as an affective deficit or lack, something that generates an ugly feeling and can no longer be ignored" (84). While the abolitionists explored in this chapter do not exactly "withhold" at the level of tone, they open up new conversations by deploying a double-edged and multifaceted tonality, which at the same time circumvents the epithetical monotony of the terms they invoke.

Perhaps one last example will illuminate better what this resistance to fossilization once made possible. An article titled "Prejudice against Color," printed in *The Colored American* in 1840, offers an example of a satirical meditation on colorphobia interwoven with a sustained interrogation of race. Opening with an exclamation, "Prejudice against color!", the piece launches a catalogue of interrogative rejoinders. "Pray tell us *what* color" the author goes on.

Black? brown? copper color? yellow? tawny? or olive? Native Americans of all these colors everywhere experience hourly indignities at the hands of persons claiming to be white. Now, is all this for *color's* sake? If so,

which of these colors excites such commotion in those sallow-skinned Americans who call themselves white? Is it black? When did they begin to be so horrified at black? Was it before black stocks came into fashion? black coats? black vests? black hats? black walking canes? black reticules? black umbrellas? black walnut tables?...How this American color-phobia would have lashed itself into a foam at the sight of the celebrated *black* goddess Diana of Ephesus! how it would have gnashed upon the old statue, and hacked away at it out of sheer spite at its color!

A prolonged thought experiment, the passage questions the definitional cohesion of whiteness, while also performing, to extravagant ends, the generalizability of its prejudicial optic. Continuing, the piece insists on taking colorphobia at its word.

Imagining “the exemplary havoc” the malady would wreak on “the most celebrated statues of antiquity,” the author reminds that “American colorphobia would be untrue to itself if it did not pitch battle with every black statue and bust that came in its way in going the rounds.”

Couched in a “claim” to whiteness, rather than any real absence of pigment, colorphobia is summoned by the author in terms comparable to what art theorist David Batchelor has called “chromophobia,” a term used to suggest that Western cultural and intellectual history has long been characterized not merely by race prejudice but by a general “loathing of colour” (22). Taking this conceit to its logical conclusion, the author of “Prejudice against Color” insinuates that whiteness and colorphobia cannot, perhaps, be disentangled: to delineate one is to determine, conceptually at least, where the other would begin and end. At the same time, by making colorphobia the subject of a

performative satirical diatribe, the author infuses the concept with a sense of absurdity its rhetorical conjuration cannot finally escape. The impression with which one is left is that phobia's analytic is neither adequate nor expendable—neither the point of the author's provocation, nor tangential to it. Rather, the author faces colorphobia as a protean antagonist, caught between satire, metaphor, vernacular nomenclature, and caricatured interiority. Only in this dynamic state does the antagonism invoked at last begin to shake the foundations on which its dialectic has been premised, allegorizing a disease of the mind as shameful as it is dubious.



## CHAPTER 4

### BEFORE HOMOPHOBIA:

#### *HORROR FEMINAE* AND EARLY SEXUAL CONVERSION THERAPY

#### AFTER WESTPHAL'S *KONTRÄRE SEXUALEMPFINDUNG*

As we were sketching, rain began to fall, pattering on the galvanised iron roof...Beside the still waters, we kissed fiercely. Joseph pulled his thing out of his trousers and showed it to me. It was like a big, dessicated calzone. 'Please touch it,' he said, guiding my hand. The ridiculously large, round, thin-skinned lump of wrinkled flesh just lay there, indifferent to my touch and devoid of any sexual appeal whatsoever.

- Yayoi Kusama, *Infinity Net* (2013)

A novel published by the Scottish writer John Davidson in 1895, titled *A Full and True Account of the Wonderful Mission of Earl Lavender*, tells the story of a protagonist who, inspired by Darwinian evolution, decides he must track down and mate with the world's fittest woman. A mission that takes him on adventures across London, including a masochistic sojourn into an underground city where he is flagellated by a mysterious "Veiled Lady," it also deteriorates regularly into banter between Lavender and his disciple, Lord Brumm. Repeatedly, their dialogue turns to Brumm's comparative disinterest in women. Brumm confesses at one moment, "I hate women"; much offended, Lavender tries to convince his friend, "Nothing could be more unevolutionary" (101). In an addendum to the novel published by *The Speaker: The Liberal Review* in 1899, Davidson later gave Brumm a chance to defend his sentiments. "I do not hate women," he explains. "I am called a misogynist; but I am properly a gynophobe. I fear women; and fear is a negative passion compatible with intelligence; whereas love and hate make judgment inept" (154). Lavender dismisses the distinction. "Misogyny or gynophobia,"

he replies, “it is all one to me; the thing is loathsome; it is the mark of an effete or an emasculated nature; the misogynist *par excellence* is the eunuch.” Later he continues, “I have only one thing to say to the misogynist—cease being a misogynist, or die commodiously. Nature is merciless and happy; it revels in the prophecy that beats in the germs of life.” To read in women the prophecy of life, Lavender thus determines, is the truest sign of manhood; to do otherwise, no matter the affect of one’s renunciation, is equivalent to social castration.

Equal parts inane and astute, Davidson’s dialogue captures how the rise of sexology and an evolving psychiatric profession in the last decades of the nineteenth century began to yield new appropriations of phobia, and how phobia, in turn, had begun to change how people thought of sex. What makes Brumm’s rhetorical stance intriguing, in other words, is not merely that he resists the hetero-evolutionary imperatives Lavender espouses, nor that he becomes, by virtue of his resistance, a model of discredited masculinity. In addition to all of this, Brumm identifies as a “gynophobe,” indicating that his sexual orientation may be boiled down at least partly to that state of “negative passion.” One knows moreover, from the novel, that this passion is not balanced by any positive desire, for men or anything else. Brumm declares in another passage, “I hate women; I hate men.” He goes on, “I have never all my life been on intimate terms with anyone who has not tried to use me for his or her own ends. My good nature always yields, and things go so far, that in order to recover my independence a rupture is regularly required” (208-9). If we apply Davidson’s subsequent rhetorical shift here, we may surmise that Brumm does not really hate all people; he has only learned to be intelligently phobic of them. Neither a creature of preference, nor of pure abdication,

Brumm maintains intercourse with humanity through an avowedly distant, paranoid vigilance.

Davidson's play with phobia and its discontinuities with hate help introduce an argument central to the last two chapters of this dissertation: in short, that sexology radically transformed phobia's signifying potential in the last decades of the nineteenth century. At the same time, the gynophobia wrought by sexology enjoyed a short lifespan, one quite distant from the term as it has circulated since. With the rise of second- and third-wave feminist theory in the twentieth century, gynophobia became, against Brumm's distinction, a term largely synonymous with, or at least deeply imbricated in, misogyny. This is not to say the two terms have enjoyed equal footing; rather, gynophobia has flickered in and out of feminist analysis, while misogyny has maintained greater centrality as an object of critique. Nevertheless, gynophobia has been taken up by some of feminism's most prominent figures. Adrienne Rich's "Disloyal to Civilization: Feminism, Racism, Gynophobia," an essay published in *Chrysalis: A Magazine of Women's Culture* in 1979, which spells the word with an "e," offers one of the most influential examples of this usage.<sup>56</sup> At the moment of gynophobia's emergence as a

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<sup>56</sup> An essay that explores writings by black and white women of the 1800s including Linda Brent (who published under the pen name Harriet Jacobs) and Lydia Maria Child, in order to account for complex formations of gender- and race-based violence in the context of U.S. slavery, "Disloyal to Civilization" undulates as an extended meditation on possibilities for woman-identified solidarity across racial barriers. In a moment of contemplative lyricism, Rich speaks to the relation between gynophobia and patriarchal dominance in concrete terms. As though improvising a vocabulary lesson, she writes, "*Male-directed fragmentation*: I am ugly if you are beautiful; you are ugly if I am beautiful. (Always the reference being, neither to me nor to you but to the man—black or white—who will judge us, find one of us wanting.) *Internalized gynophobia*: if I despise myself as woman I must despise you even more, for you are my rejected part, my antiself" (300). Beneath a fragmented feminism, Rich indicates, this gynophobia lurks. The insights or ambiguities conjured by Rich's brief turn to a hermeneutics of

concept among late nineteenth-century psychiatrists, however, the term did not yet carry connotations of feminist activism. Rather, the term signaled an object of medical concern and curiosity: a deficiency in sexual proclivities among men for women, conceived of as a collective of potential partners. By the late 1880s and 1890s, gynophobia and comparable terms gesturing to a morbid fear of women became ways of recognizing and accounting for the diseased mentality characterizing certain perverted men, among them urnings, asexuals, invert, and eventually the homosexual, to name just a handful.

Gynophobia became not so much a synonym for the homosexual or any other singular type in these decades, but rather a means of understanding the homosexual's failures alongside the failures of a wider category of men who did not enter into relationships with women. By bringing a pervasive emphasis on failure into focus, this chapter demonstrates that from the late 1860s to the end of the nineteenth century, the rise of sexology introduced something more complex than what has frequently been narrated as a proliferation of typologies and fetishistic cathexes divergent from heterosexual, cisgender coupling. While the period is often remembered as a pressure cooker for the making of sexual orientation writ large, the incitement to object choice was just one development among many in an age thick with invention. Scholars have begun accounting for some of the period's alternatives to desire in recent years. Benjamin Kahan has demonstrated in *Celibacies* (2013), for instance, how celibacy emerged as its own form of modern deviance. Wary and weary of the eagerness with which some critics have treated celibacy as a mere "fig leaf for homosexuality" (3), Kahan proposes that

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gynophobia are not the immediate concern of this chapter. Nevertheless, Rich's essay offers a portrait of gynophobia with which twenty-first century critics will be familiar and, therefore, a conception from which this chapter endeavors to separate itself, however temporarily, to discern earlier iterations.

such scholarship betrays a fallacious “expressive hypothesis.” An extension of what Michel Foucault famously called the repressive hypothesis, where sex is portrayed as always struggling to liberate itself from prudish expurgation, the expressive hypothesis describes a hermeneutic by which non-normative embodiments of gender and sexuality are read habitually as structures of occlusion, closeting an interiority that requires help speaking its name (5). Against this trend, Kahan asks what it would mean to read celibacy on its own terms, without recourse to subtext. With a resonant skepticism, Sianne Ngai’s *Ugly Feelings* (2005) interrogates the tendency among scholars, writing in the legacy of “Barthes’s *jouissance*,” to neglect “disgust” or to read it as always “dialectically conjoined” and therefore subsumed within desire (332, 3). Building on these interventions, this chapter observes that in the late 1800s, prior to the triumph of psychoanalysis, writers and physicians began asking along similar lines what it would mean to read phobia, outside the strictures of object choice, as a motivator of sociality and sexual life. Beyond the bounds of drive and impulse, phobia appeared useful in its ability to cast a world of apparent attachments as one of aftershocks: a social field produced and demarcated by rampant, repercussive aversions.

To account for the way writers theorized phobia in these terms, this chapter is divided into two parts and a final coda. The first explores how phobia’s intersection with sexology evolved across various scholars, theories, and keywords. Looking to major figures including German neurologist Carl Friedrich Otto Westphal, German sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing, and British sexologists Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, I suggest that affective states like fear, repugnance, and distaste acquired significance during this period for representing conditions of automatic resistance to the

concept of sexual selection, famously accounted for by Charles Darwin in his *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, in 1871. Around the same time, Westphal sparked interest in a related concept he called “Contrary Sexual Feeling” (*Die Konträre Sexualempfindung*), which he used to account for “an inborn reversal” of “sexual feeling” that caused persons to be disinterested in the so-called opposite sex. A concept Foucault credits with marking the birth of the modern homosexual, contrary sexual feeling more precisely helped inaugurate an era fascinated with contrariness as an affective-sexual mode. As Krafft-Ebing, Ellis, Symonds, and others theorized conditions of sexual perversion, they obsessed over phenomena not only of attraction, but also of what we might call sexual *unselection*, or the means by which humans work themselves out of familiar evolutionary mechanisms, via sexualities premised primarily on negation. In this context, U.S. neurologist George Miller Beard, inspired by another of Westphal’s influential concepts, *agoraphobie*, appears to have been the first to catalogue gynophobia as a condition, spelling it “*Gynephobia*” in his work *A Practical Treatise on Nervous Exhaustion* (1880). A book that helped Beard popularize the term “neurasthenia” (the primary achievement for which he is remembered today), it also holds the distinction of presenting the longest list of phobias published in the U.S. since Rush, nearly one hundred years prior. As I demonstrate that phobia served, in Beard and elsewhere, as an alternative to the rhetoric of object choice, I observe also how it inspired the development of concepts like “gynomania,” to account for other orientations likewise irreducible to desire.

Following this brief history of phobia in the context of sexology, and related forays in neurology, I transition to an exploration of how gynophobia emerged in a U.S.

literary context. In 1885, freshly retired from his professorship at Harvard Medical School, physician and Fireside poet Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., published a final novel titled *A Mortal Antipathy*, in which he offered to the world of letters an imaginative case study of gynophobia. A letter Holmes sent to Beard in 1882, held in the Beard Collection at Yale University, shows that the two shared a brief correspondence. Expressing thanks to Beard for sending him some of his work, Holmes writes, “I also read it, every word of it and with much interest.” He explains further, “I have never given much attention to the wonderful phenomena occurring in the nervous system of certain persons,” but then confesses he has been struck with “curiosity” “whenever they have come in my way.” Toward the end he observes, “if I had more time [I] should perhaps try to learn more.”

On the one hand, I admit in a close reading of *A Mortal Antipathy* that the novel could easily be interpreted as being a narrative about—or even as providing a theory for—homosexuality. In fact, in accounting for the cause, sufferings, and eventual cure of the condition, as they transpire across the life of protagonist Maurice Kirkwood, the plot seems almost like an experiment in what we would today call gay conversion therapy. As the novel opens, Maurice shows up in the fictional New England college town of Arrowhead Village, accompanied by a handsome Italian companion named Paolo whose job, we later discover, is to keep women away. When Dr. Butts learns that Maurice has been diagnosed by the British Royal Academy of Biological Sciences with gynophobia, the physician decides he must find a cure. Soon after, the novel’s would-be love interest Euthymia Tower saves Maurice from a burning house, thus ridding him of his condition once and for all. In advance of this moment, Maurice notes that finding a cure for the condition might cast “light” upon “certain peculiarities of human character often wrongly

interpreted as due to moral perversion” (223). And, indeed, once he is cured, Maurice and Euthymia quickly marry. If we resist a presentist interpretation, however, what makes Maurice truly mysterious is that his orientation seems to be driven primarily by an aversion to sexual interest. While the novel ultimately restores Maurice to the demands of a compulsory heterosexuality, to put it another way, Holmes may be said to investigate further, and more fundamentally, a culture of compulsory *affinity*. Holmes emphasizes this conceit when Maurice suggests, at one moment, that his predisposition might be considered the counterpoint to a concept Johann Wolfgang von Goethe famously aestheticized in 1809. In an autobiographical account of his disorder, Maurice devotes his life story to those “who know by their own experience that elective affinities have as their necessary counterpart, and, as it were, their polar opposites, currents not less strong of elective repulsions” (208). Thus, I read *A Mortal Antipathy* as an imaginative foray in a therapeutic model of re-circuiting sexual affect—one Holmes genuinely hoped might be adopted and adapted by physicians for future treatment—yet which reads phobia, rather than libido, as the queer rift in an otherwise fluid heterosexuality. The chapter concludes by exploring another major figure of the late nineteenth-century, British book and magazine illustrator Aubrey Beardsley, as a figure who made much of his career by attempting to chart a gynophobic aesthetic—one in dialogue with, but also actively divergent from the pathologizing rhetoric of *fin-de-siècle* sexology characteristic of Beard’s *Nervous Exhaustion* and Holmes’s *A Mortal Antipathy*.

#### SEXUAL UNSELECTION AFTER THE *DESCENT OF MAN*

As Ivan Crozier notes in his introduction to Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds’s *Sexual Inversion*, one of the most influential texts during the rise of sexology



was Darwin's *Descent of Man*, in which the biologist supplemented his theory of natural selection with emphasis on the role of reproduction in the transformation of species over time (16). At this juncture, the hegemony of object choice, as a vital condition of the continuation and evolution of life, became entrenched in the life sciences and social sciences alike. For sexologists, the idea that evolution depended heavily on conditions of mate selection would become valuable as a concept for distinguishing normative desire (that which might successfully produce offspring) from perversion. Bad cathexes, in this context, could designate deviant proclivities toward people, as well as various inanimate things—in Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, everything from footwear and aprons to handkerchiefs and fox pelts (169, 170; 174; 183). One of the great legacies of late nineteenth-century sexology commenced with a similar emphasis on mate selection: the categorization of subjects into heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual types, by which one's likelihood to pursue reproductive ends could be predicted and stabilized through theories of unchanging predilection. Yet scholars have tended to overlook just how much interest sexologists took, simultaneously, in phenomena of detachment, where the evolutionary imperative to select appeared thwarted or completely absent. In place of choice, physicians repeatedly discovered affective conditions for sexual *unselection*: impediments to or impossibilities of attraction, around which a subject's sexual life could primarily revolve.

It is important to note from the outset that conditions for sexual unselection were not understood to be separate from early iterations and explorations of homosexuality. On the contrary, sexologists often understood same-sex attraction in exactly these terms: as driven by negative affect first, and positive desire only after the fact. This is not very

surprising, perhaps, insofar as homosexuality has a long tradition of being delegitimized on these grounds, as belonging to a state of pathological denial rather than any genuine expression of love or positive connection. I would argue, however, that in many such instances, the function of sexual unselection belonged to a wider terrain of inquiry interested not only in delegitimizing same-sex deviance, but also in giving pervasive negative feelings their due. Westphal's enormously influential essay on contrary sexual feeling (a term originally theorized by his mentor Wilhelm Griesinger) may be credited with inaugurating this line of investigation both in Europe and the U.S. Using the term to account for instances where individuals felt no attraction for the opposite sex, Westphal specified that he did not mean the concept to be synonymous with any positive orientation directed elsewhere. "I have chosen the term...to express the fact," he explains, "that the sexual drive as such is not always simultaneously involved" and that, instead, "it is the feeling of being alienated from one's own sex according to one's entire inner being." The contrariness of the feeling to which he referred had less to do with deviant selection than it did a sexual state organized around contrariness itself: a state of alienation that had reached a threshold of ontological permanence.

While contrary sexual feeling soon took on the positive valences Westphal avoided (hence Foucault's gesture to it as a foundational moment for homosexuality), sexologists maintained an interest in the capacity for subjects to experience sex as a world rife with repulsion. It would be easy to chalk these feelings up to Victorian prudery and all of its discontents, but again we should observe that this explanation fails to recognize just how compelling and multifaceted physicians found sexual incapacities as objects in their own right. Krafft-Ebing's magnum opus *Psychopathia Sexualis*, first

published in 1886, is an extraordinary case in point. Exploring a wide spectrum of affective negations, from utter dread to nonchalant distaste, Krafft-Ebing suggests from the text's introduction that such dispositions may be said to originate in two strikingly common pathologies. The first he calls "Inhibition." A condition by which "The erection centre may become functionally incapable," it takes shape either as "an emotion (disgust, fear of contagion), or an idea of impotence," thus making "the act with the person concerned of the opposite sex temporarily or absolutely impossible" (35). Accounting for a motley crew of bad spouses, fearers of germs, self-abusers, and vague others, the examples Krafft-Ebing offers appear linked by a nervous incapacity for hetero-functionality. The second, a less tortured condition called "Anaesthesia," exists instead wherever "organic impulses arising in the sexual organs, as well as all concepts, and visual, auditory, and olfactory sense-impressions fail to excite the individual sexually" (37). Here we have something closer to a complete disinterest in sex.

As noted above, such conditions of sexual unselection could nevertheless appear compatible with other impulses or fantasies. Krafft-Ebing relates one such instance in a section devoted to masochism. "In reply to the question as to what he regarded as the most lustful act," he explains, "the patient said: *'It is my greatest delight to lie naked on the floor and have myself trod upon by girls wearing elegant boots,'*" a wish, he clarifies, which is "of course...possible only in brothels." Krafft-Ebing goes on to clarify that to be trod upon, for the individual, was an end in itself and completely antithetical to foreplay. "The patient has not thoughts that impel to intercourse," he writes, "at least, not in the sense of imissio penis in vagina,—an act that affords him no pleasure" (125-6). A later case, describing a man with a fetish for women's shoes is depicted similarly. A fetish

originating in an incident in the individual's childhood, where a "servant girl" "*stroked his penis with her foot with her shoe on,*" it developed into an orientation where nothing but shoes could interest him sexually, so that he used them frequently to masturbate. Krafft-Ebing is careful to emphasize, nevertheless, that the fetish is driven equally by systematic unselection: "Nothing else in a woman could excite him; the thought of coitus filled him with horror. Men did not interest him in any way." In describing the individual's subsequent effort to marry as an antidote to the fetish, Krafft-Ebing takes this significance of his unselective disposition further:

Though devoid of the slightest feeling for the female sex, he determined on marriage, which seemed to him to be the only remedy....In spite of lively erections when he thought of his wife's shoes, in attempts at cohabitation he was absolutely impotent; for his distaste for coitus, and for close intercourse in general, was far more powerful than the influence of the shoe-idea, which induced sexual excitement (178)

A remarkable formulation, it suggests that the shoe functions not only as a desired object but also as a kind of barrier to an unwanted sex act, and that this latter obstructive function is the more crucial of the two. Indeed, when we discover, in following, that the doctor who treated the individual suggested he "hang a shoe up over his bed, and look at it fixedly during coitus, at the same time imagining his wife to be a shoe," we must wonder how successful this could have been. To have worked within the schematic Krafft-Ebing imagines, the shoe's presence would need not merely to excite the individual, but to extract him imaginatively from coitus itself, so to distract from the disinclinations otherwise at play.

In proceeding to account for same-sex predilections, Krafft-Ebing keeps negative passions in the balance. Describing a condition he calls acquired (as opposed to congenital) homosexuality, he presents the case history of a woman who develops her abhorrence for men relatively quickly after spending time with them as a railway worker, a job for which she had to “conceal” her sex with men’s clothing. “I took an unconquerable dislike to them,” she explains. “However, since I am of a very passionate nature and need to have some loving person on whom to depend, and to whom I can wholly surrender myself, I felt myself more and more powerfully drawn toward intelligent women and girls who were in sympathy with me” (195). Another case confesses in a section Krafft-Ebing titles “Effemination and Viraginity,” “I wish...to state that I cannot come to the determination to transform my sexual life by means of sexual intercourse with the opposite sex. The thought of such intercourse fills me with repugnance and disgust” (289). The same sentiments reappear in his section on “Androgyny or Gynandry,” used to designate cases of contrary sexuality “in whom not only the character and all the feelings are in accord with the abnormal sexual instinct, but also the skeletal form, the features, voice, etc.; so that the individual approaches the opposite sex anthropologically” (305). A “Miss X., aged 38,” “who produced a remarkable impression by reason of her attire, features, and conduct”—these including “a gentleman’s hat, her hair closely cut, eye-glasses, a gentleman’s cravat...and boots with high heels”—had never had, we are told, “inclination for persons of the opposite sex nor for those of her own sex.” This would apparently change in 1872, when she began to develop feelings for women, but even the details of her emergent sexual impulse take a complicated aspect. Her “repugnance for gentlemen and their society” persisted, while

her “associat[ions]” with “ladies” began to admit “a kind of love-relation.” “This predilection for women,” we learn further, “was decidedly more than mere friendship, since it expressed itself in tears, jealousy, etc.” (309). An erotic development where a repugnance for men remains stable, while admitting something like same-sex love, the latter nevertheless becomes legible less by way of sexual fulfillment than it does through expressions of undesirable feeling. In short, phenomena of sexual unselection captivated a sexological imagination in myriad forms and across a vast range of intensities.

One of the most influential concepts to emerge in this literature was that of the *horror feminae*, or horror of women, attributed to men incapable of having sex with women. In *Psychopathia Sexualis* Krafft-Ebing interweaves the term seamlessly with accounts of same-sex sexuality, at moments treating them almost as two sides of the same coin. Regarding a case in the section on “Urnings,” we are told that the “sexual impulse to his own sex had existed from his earliest childhood, and was congenital. He had always had *horror feminae*, and had never been inclined to avail himself of the charms of women” (270). Another case, a Dr. G suffering from effemination, reported similarly that “If he happened to see a *ballet*, only the male dancers interested him. Since he could remember, he had had a *horror feminae*” (301). To account for parallel feelings in women, Krafft-Ebing used the gender neutral *horror sexus alterius* (89, 231). For men and women alike, he seems to have understood horror to be especially indicative of congenital, as opposed to acquired homosexuality. “The essential feature of this strange manifestation of the sexual life,” he explains, “is the want of sexual sensibility for the opposite sex, even to the extent of horror, while sexual inclination and impulse toward the same sex are present” (222).

In *Sexual Inversion*, Ellis and Symonds added to the concept of *horror feminae* that of *horror masculis*, to describe a form of disgust pervasive among women. Describing the mental operations of “sexual inverts,” or persons whose gender traits do not coincide with their assigned biological sex, the two authors observe that such individuals not only avoid but tend to be seized with terror at the thought of sexual intimacy with the other gender. One is tempted to speculate Ellis may be speaking as an object of terror firsthand, insofar as his spouse Edith Lees openly preferred women, had affairs with women, and declined to sleep with him in bed.<sup>57</sup> But in an interesting turn, Ellis and Symonds clarify that such an impulse should not seem all that surprising: “It is perhaps not difficult to account for the horror—much stronger than that normally felt towards a person of the same sex—with which the invert often regards the sexual organs of persons of the opposite sex.” They continue,

It cannot be said that the sexual organs of either sex under the influence of sexual excitement are aesthetically desirable; they only become emotionally desirable through the parallel excitement of the beholder.

When the absence of parallel excitement is accompanied by the beholder

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<sup>57</sup> As Jo-ann Wallace notes, our knowledge of Edith Lees is, in many ways, one-sided. “Following her death,” Wallace explains, “Havelock Ellis attempted to manage her posthumous reputation by issuing anthologies of her work and by devoting his own autobiography *My Life* (1940), to a detailed examination of their marriage. Edith Ellis herself never spoke openly about her longings or her lesbian relationships, and since Havelock destroyed most of her letters and other private papers after completing his autobiography, we must look to her fiction and lectures for evidence of her self-understanding” (“How Wonderful to Die” 147). For more on Edith’s sexuality and writing, see another essay by Wallace titled “Edith Ellis, Sapphic Idealism, and *The Lover’s Calendar*,” published in Laura Doan and Jane Garrity’s *Sapphic Modernities: Sexuality, Women, and National Culture* in 2006. Also see Martha Vicinus’ “The History of Lesbian History,” published in *Feminist Studies* in 2012.

by the sense of unfamiliarity, all the conditions are present for the production of intense *horror feminae* or *horror masculis* (116)

Far from being an immediate sign of pathology, aversion turns out to be the most natural response to genital proximity. Only a sense of reciprocal excitement—directed we may presume through secondary sexual characteristics or environmental factors—establishes conditions for the suppression of this initial horror, thus making an otherwise disturbing reproductive act palatable. Sexual inversion, being only an amplification of this intuitive response, reflects back onto all forms of attachment the necessity of a disavowal of horror, for any propagation of the species to proceed.

A letter Symonds wrote to Ellis in 1892 shows that even as Symonds insisted to Ellis, in their early preparations for *Sexual Inversion*, that same-sex sexuality needed to be fundamentally depathologized, he was willing to retain the idea that horror was, for certain individuals, an important factor. Expressing some “doubt” as to “whether we are completely agreed as to the part played in the phenomenon by morbidity,” Symonds makes it his main objective in the letter to clarify, “I should be inclined to abolish the neuropathical hypothesis” (90-1). But he proceeds, “The only cases in which I should be inclined to accept the theory of psychopathy are those extreme ones in which there is a marked *Horror Feminae*.” In a letter designed to convince Ellis that same-sex attraction is “a matter of preference rather than of fixed physiological or morbid diathesis” (91), this leeway he lends horror is a curious allowance. For Ellis and Symonds alike, a horror of genital difference appeared, if not a particularly advantageous response to human anatomy, at least a very reasonable one.



## BEARD'S MORBID FEARS

Across these decades, the literature on phobia likewise began to flourish. Once again, Westphal played a pivotal role. The year following his essay on contrary sexual feeling, he provoked a sudden spike in new enumerations of phobia, across Europe and elsewhere, by introducing a concept he called agoraphobia (“Die Agoraphobie”), used to designate an acute dread of open spaces. A diagnosis that has remained in circulation ever since, it first presented itself to Westphal when he observed that certain patients of his felt completely “unable to walk over squares and through certain streets” and were “out of fear of such paths, restricted in the freedom of movement.” First observing the condition in three residents of Berlin—a Mr. C, aged 32; a Mr. N., aged 24; and a Mr. P., aged 26—Westphal found that the men experienced panic in the vicinity of open squares and empty urban corridors, as well as in crowds in which they found themselves alone. In such contexts, an escape route or familiar face was necessary to alleviate the resulting anxiety and reinstate security.

David Trotter describes this moment, in a period he calls phobia’s *belle époque*, as the “invention” of agoraphobia, to account for the myriad ways in which agoraphobia was produced as an object of knowledge (466). Westphal’s term quickly sparked the proliferation of additional phobias, to explain other cases in which individuals found themselves inhibited from moving freely in space. Parisian physician Benjamin Ball coined the related “claustrophobia” in 1879, describing “a state of mind in which there was a morbid fear of closed spaces” (371). A few years prior, Antígona Raggi of Bologna had come up with a similar condition called “clithrophobia,” accounting for a “phrenzy” induced by “limited space” where the subject experiences, suddenly, “an invincible desire

to get out” (“Clithrophobia” 273).<sup>58</sup> Illustrating the condition, Raggi described a case where an anonymous yet distinguished Italian painter, “[h]aving been shut up with his competitors in a gallery, and excited by the praise bestowed on his work,” stood without warning and “with a fixed stare” rushed for the door. Finding himself unable to open it, he noticed a raised window nearby, jumped out of it onto an adjacent roof, and continued to jump from roof to roof until finally access to the ground was discovered (274).<sup>59</sup> By 1884, some physicians were even talking of a condition they called claustrophilia, defined, despite its suffix, as “the fear of leaving a room or a house” (“The Doubting Malady”). A condition akin to agoraphobia, it was nevertheless defined less by what stood beyond familiar doors or other apertures than by the idea of crossing those thresholds. Sufferers tended to prefer “a very small bedroom,” finding even “the sight of an open door” completely “unsupportable.”

The fascination with pathologies of spatial predilection began to overlap increasingly with the discourse on sexual deviance. Various reports show that a number of physicians understood agoraphobia, in particular, to be deeply linked to sexual pathology. A Dr. S. S. Purple, president of the New York Academy of Medicine, reported in 1878 that in many cases agoraphobia had been observed “to be traceable directly to sexual excess of some kind” (335). Another German neurologist, E. Cordes, whose term *Platzangst* served as a synonymous runner-up to agoraphobia during the period, counted “venereal excesses” alongside “disturbances of digestion” and “exaggerated intellectual

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<sup>58</sup> “Clithrophobia.” *The London Reader: Of Literature, Science, Art and General Information* (Jul. 20, 1878) 31.794: 273.

<sup>59</sup> For an early notice in an American periodical detailing Raggi’s classification of clithrophobia, see “Another Monomania,” published in *The Doctor* in November 1877, as well as *The Clinic* later that same month (252).

labors” as one of the disorder’s primary causes (“Clinical Psychiatry” 244). In a review of major contributions to the study of agoraphobia leading up to 1890, a Dr. C. W. Suckling of London notes a “marked potency of childbearing” in the development of “agoraphobia and allied fears,” attributing the cause to constitutive factors including “excessive lactation, frequent pregnancies, and sexual excess” (478). In the same article Suckling offers a corresponding case history, describing a forty-year old woman, M. H., who after having nine children and one miscarriage appears to have discovered the cause on her own. “She attributes her illness,” the doctor notes, “to having so many children, and to over-suckling” (480-1).

In a series of articles for the *Medical Record* titled “Nervous Diseases connected with the Male Genital Function,” the U.S. neurologist George Miller Beard likewise suggested a relationship between agoraphobia and sexual dysfunction. For the first installment of the series, Beard tentatively speculated that “agoraphobia and [other] allied nervous affections” may all be “pretty directly under the influence of the genital system” (75). Evidence for such a hypothesis lay partly in Beard’s findings that conditions like agoraphobia tended to emerge “almost exclusively during the period of greatest sexual activity—between the ages of twenty and fifty—very rarely before fifteen or after fifty-five or sixty.” The implication, he contends, is that “It is quite possible that simple activity, or a condition of *readiness for activity* of the genital organs, without abuse in any form, may, by reflex action, excite various nervous symptoms and disorders which disappear as the genital activity declines.” Such a relation finds further evidence in the second installment of the series, where Beard observes that “spermatorrhea” (a disorder characterized by involuntary seminal emission) frequently triggers exacerbations in

nervous conditions like agoraphobia, in patients where both conditions are present.

“Many of my cases have this experience,” he writes. “[T]hey may go for a week or for two weeks without any trouble, when, either with or without any exciting cause, a volley is discharged, and for a day, or several days, they are nervous, irritable, neurasthenic, or [display] certain special symptoms” (555). Among these special symptoms, Beard names “sweating of the hands, agoraphobia, and aching of the loins.”

Over time, Beard nevertheless grew dissatisfied with agoraphobia’s hegemony in neurological literature. At issue, he believed, was a lack of precision, which the elaboration of new phobias held the potential to rectify. A manuscript of a lecture delivered on hysteria at Long Island Hospital in June 1872, now held in the Beard Collection at Yale University, shows at an early moment the interest Beard took in phobia as a factor in nervous disorders. One of the staple features of Beard’s career, already visible in the manuscript, was his belief that life in the U.S. was especially susceptible to the cultivation of nervousness. Following this line of thought, the lecture begins by taking American physicians to task for shying away from the topic. Beard understood this neglect to be partly an issue of nervousness being “snubbed” by the medical profession (2). Equally problematic, however, was the inclination of American physicians to adopt all of their theories on mental illness from Europe. The mistake in the latter trend, Beard suggested, is that nervous disorders—classified in the lecture as “aneuric diseases”—could vary highly from civilization to civilization. For Beard no population had ever been more susceptible to nervous malfunction than that of the U.S. “Many of these aneuric diseases are enormously more frequent in America than in Europe,” he writes. “[I]n the United States these diseases have assumed both a

multiplicity and variety of phase that are paralleled in no other nation of recorded history” (4). Not only was this influx of nervous disease a matter of place, he goes on to explain. With the exception of hysteria, many of the conditions faced by Americans could be understood to have emerged for the first time in recent history: “They are, as I shall presently show, the fruit of civilization, the penalty of progress. Not only are these diseases peculiar to civilization; they are peculiar to modern in distinction from the ancient civilization and have developed during the last half century [emphasis Beard’s]” (5).<sup>60</sup> Setting the geographical and historical stage for his lecture, Beard invites readers to contemplate the phobias he goes on to enumerate as a series of civilizational side effects.

The lecture’s segment on phobia follows an extended definition and breakdown of the symptomatology of hysteria, which he maintains may afflict men and women alike. In detailing a diverse array of hysterical manifestations, Beard reaches the conclusion that the disorder is best understood as a “mocking bird among diseases,” which “may imitate the notes of any one or all the rest,” liable to produce sensations “of beating, of pounding, of throbbing, of rolling, of biting, of localized heat and cold in the extreme sensations of burning or freezing: to the sensations of increased size, as though the head or whole body were terribly hypertrophied,” and in some cases producing a “morbid sensation” that seems to inhabit the person as an independent “positive entity,” “roll[ing] about the body, changing with every motion, like an empty barrel or a ship at sea” (18). In conveying the capaciousness of hysteria thusly, Beard proceeds to the “allied affections,” which take

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<sup>60</sup> At a subsequent moment, Beard goes so far as to compare his early forays in the treatment of nervous disorders to the colonization of the Americas. “My campaign against these nervous symptoms,” he writes, “was like the campaign of Cortez against the undisciplined myriads of Mexico, with the difference that Cortez was victorious, and I, at first, was not” (60).

more definite forms, the first being neurasthenia, the second being an affection to which, he says, “I have given the generic name Phobia from φobos—meaning fear that amounts to a disease” (19). He goes on to explain, “To a degree, fear is normal, is physiological; simply an expression of the caution that is necessary to existence: but not infrequently it degenerates into disease and like hysteria indicates either bad organization or nervous impairment or both at once.” With this definition given, Beard goes on to divide the “genus” of phobia into two of its most common “species.” “Astraphobia” he uses to designate a fear of lightning and thunderstorms. Agoraphobia, attributed explicitly to Westphal, he takes to account for the fear of a specific place or “locality.”<sup>61</sup>

Beard went on to adapt and publish the lecture two years later in *Cases of Hysteria, Neurasthenia, Spinal Irritation, or Allied Affections* (1974), with no more species of phobia there elaborated. Not until the publication of his greatly influential *A Practical Treatise on Nervous Exhaustion* in 1880 did Beard test the idea that there were certain fears from which agoraphobia needed to be actively disentangled. In the treatise, Beard groups all such conditions under the title “Morbid Fear,” once again treating pathological fear as an allied affection of nervous disorders, or what he had come to call “neurasthenia,” synonymous with “nervous exhaustion.” Here, however, Beard specifies in greater detail the physiological conditions by which phobias emerge. He explains,

Morbid fears are the result of various functional diseases of the nervous system, and imply a debility, a weakness, an incompetency and

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<sup>61</sup> With the potential manifestations of agoraphobia elaborated, Beard also proceeds to account briefly for a condition that would not long after become known as “acrophobia.” “The fear of ascending a height sometimes amounts to a positive disease,” he explains (21). Outing himself as one who suffers from the condition, he writes, “There are individuals of whom I am chief, whom all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them would not tempt to climb to the masthead or the top of a church spire.”

inadequacy, as compared with the normal state of the individual. A healthy man fears; but when he is functionally diseased in his nervous system he is liable to fear all the more; to have the normal, necessary fear of his physiological condition descend into an abnormal pathological state simply from a lack of force in the disordered nervous system. The debility of the brain—the nerve impoverishment—renders it impossible to meet responsibility, just as paraplegia makes it difficult or impossible to walk; morbid fear is indeed but a psychical paralysis (50-1)

With these physiological conditions for phobia elaborated, Beard goes on to make the strikingly categorical claim that “no symptom” of nervous disorder “is so likely to be overlooked, or slighted, or misinterpreted, or improperly named, as this one symptom of morbid fear” (52). In an effort to answer this general neglect of phobia, Beard launches into a list of phobias most commonly encountered, beginning once again with astraphobia and agoraphobia before elaborating upon nine others.

Finding agoraphobia “inadequate to express the many varieties of morbid fear which the expression fear of place covers,” Beard treats it as a subcategory of a more comprehensive category he calls topophobia, designating a general fear of places in all varieties. Counter to agoraphobia’s resistance to open public squares, he lists claustrophobia as that iteration of topophobia marked by an “inability to stay within doors” (58). In contrast to all of these, Beard uses the term Anthropophobia to indicate a fear of mankind or society specifically, irrespective of locale (60). In addition, Beard lists monophobia, meaning the “fear of being alone” (60); pathophobia, a synonym for

hypochondriasis<sup>62</sup> (60); pantaphobia, meaning “fear of everything” (61); phobophobia, or the fear of fear itself (61); mysophobia, or “fear of contamination”; and siderodromophobia, defined as a “morbid disinclination for work.” Following these definitions, Beard returns once more to the concept of Anthropophobia to describe a peculiar subset—a condition titled “Gynephobia,” defined as “Fear of woman” (67).

The term enjoyed a brief surge in usage during the following decade. Medical textbooks including Edward Bermingham’s *Encyclopaedic Index of Medicine and Surgery* (1882), George Milbry Gould’s *Dictionary of Medicine, Biology, and Allied Sciences* (1894), and Theodore Kellogg’s *Textbook on Mental Diseases* (1897), list gynephobia as a legitimate pathology. Writing for the *Dublin Journal of Medical Science*, a J. Strahan went on to affirm the veracity of Beard’s nomenclature at length, writing of anthropophobia, defined as a “fear of mingling with men,” and gynaephobia [sic], defined as “fear of women, usually due to sexual exhaustion,” that both were marked by an “aversion of the eyes and hanging [of] the head” (351). While admitting that these are common in neurasthenia generally, he asserts they are “almost uniformly present in the sexual form,” being “an involuntary expression of inferiority.” Meditating further on the disposition, he continues,

The man averting his look feels that his brain and nerve-force, for the moment at least, are inferior to the person’s whose gaze he is unable to meet. This symptom often puts the physician on the track of the complaint

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<sup>62</sup> Pathophobia was an exception to Beard’s contention that many of the conditions with which he was concerned had arisen in a U.S. context only recently. Pathophobia he believed to be a “very old” disease, and that “through the increase in culture it is relatively diminishing; just like the forms of hysteria, epilepsy, and chorea, that were so common in the middle ages” (130).



at once....The inability to look one in the face also improves or gets worse with the general condition, so that it becomes a criterion of the progress of the patient.

Even with these physiological correlates at hand, still other physicians considered gynophobia a very difficult condition to treat. A doctor in Baltimore, Maryland, by the name of John J. Caldwell submitted a case study with the header, “Case 3. Gynophobia,” to the *Therapeutic Gazette* on December 15, 1880. “Mr.—’s case presents some interesting points,” he begins. “When in bed alone, his erections were sufficient, but in company with a woman he utterly failed to perform the act” (346). He then confesses, however, “I reported this case as a failure,” as all treatments—“Electricity, rest, cold bath, and the free use of damania utterly failed.”

As an identifiable pathological condition, gynophobia represented in the early decades of sexology something decidedly distinct from misogyny. As the concept began to circulate in U.S. periodicals, it belonged more to an experimental moment in discourses linking affective maladies and deficiencies with sexual aberration, joining a host of neologisms that flared up briefly and soon after fizzled out. Among these, one of the most provocative, appearing as an inversion of gynophobia, was an early concept gesturing to transgender subjectivity doctors called “gynomania,” defined in one account as a “passion,” akin in nature to monomania and kleptomania, which “some young people have for the dress and manner of the opposite sex.” The account proceeds by treating the condition as a pathological continuation of society’s general move toward androgyny, noting, “Young men have reached the limit of effeminacy when they have curled their hair, and parted it in the middle. There is no other safety valve for the escape of their pent

up womanhood; and he that would go further must adopt the entire dress and appearance of a woman.” Remarkable here is the transformation of gender into a substance or fluid, in need of a “safety valve,” by which womanhood might be imaginatively shut off. Indicating an obsession not with women *per se*, but with social conventions and excesses of femininity, as a cultural construct, gynomania appears to have occupied a strange middle ground between being conspicuously soaked in femininity and being perfectly awash in its social function, to the extent that one could become impervious to detection. “Startling as it may seem,” the author continues,

there are men, some of them no longer young, who can no more refrain from skirts and bustles than the toper from his glass. Some time since a young man was arrested in the streets of a neighboring city, dressed like a fashionable lady. His slender form was rendered more so by the tightest of stays; his legs were bound together by a pulled-back skirt and bustle; his narrow feet were encased in high-heeled boots; his hair was crimped and frizzed; he was adorned with ear rings, breast pin, ruffles, and laces; he was accustomed to walk the streets midday, unsuspected by either sex. Although heavily punished by fines and imprisonment, he always returns at the earliest possible moment to his peculiar practices, unable to break away from this strange infatuation.

Subject to fines, arrest, and imprisonment, even while being “unsuspected by either sex,” gynomaniacs appear to have threatened their environment less by way of any chaotic interruption of gender norms than through a mania so precise it threatened to go

unremarked. Equally central to the pathology described is a recidivism no amount of discipline successfully curtails.<sup>63</sup>

An 1881 account by Edward Charles Spitzka, an influential neurologist and contemporary of Beard's (famous today for testifying on behalf of Charles J. Guiteau's insanity during the defendant's trial for the assassination of James Garfield), links gynomania explicitly to the sexological literature being produced in Europe. Gynomania, he explains, has "received due consideration at the hands of eminent German and French alienists," among them "Westphal, under the head of 'Contraere Sexualempfindung' and Krafft-Ebing, in a very thorough paper dealing with all varieties of sexual perversion" (359). Defining the condition as a "degenerative psychosis," by which "the patient feels himself inclined to assume the feminine dress and gestures, or goes so far as to feel himself a woman during the otherwise normally performed sexual act," Spitzka proceeds to observe categorically, "They are all of them incurable." However, in determining what physicians understood gynophobia to entail, gynomania may prove most significant as a

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<sup>63</sup> A subsequent case history published in 1881 depicts a case of gynomania as a steady descent into madness. Having repressed the condition in order to marry and have children, the individual nevertheless soon after purchases a pair of French heels. "These boots he boldly wore upon the promenade in fine weather with pants elevated to show the heel," the author explains. "In bad weather he was wont to put on these boots and button them in front of a long mirror, about once a week." The person began wearing corsets rapidly afterward. From this moment forward, we are told, "he advanced step by step down the ladder, purchasing various articles of female attire, until at length he bought a black silk dress, which he had made to fit him very tightly, and in which he took great pride. Curls and switches, false hair, earrings and breast pins, all aided in feeding this peculiar fire. He would even sit for hours tightly laced, while a lady hair-dresser curled and frizzed his hair like a woman. At length he went so far as to walk the city streets and even attend church, wearing his new black silk dress caught up on one side so as to expose a white fluted skirt, beneath which his high-heeled French boots were visible. With heavily padded chest, tightly squeezed waist, enormous bustle, his hair tortured into fantastic forms, his ears in crew vices, and his feet crowded into the narrowest and most uncomfortable boots, he would walk for miles, or dance for hours, with great pleasure."

pathology of fascination from which gynophobia did not, in fact, appear mutually exclusive. Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* illustrates as much in showing how analogous concepts could be comorbid in a singular case study. "I could not approach girls," one case explains,

I feared them, but they were not strange to me. They impressed me as being more like myself; I envied them. I would have denied myself all pleasures if, after my classes, at home I could have been a girl and thus have gone out. Crinoline and a smoothly-fitting glove were my ideals. With every lady's gown I saw I fancied how I should feel in it,—*i.e.*, as a lady. (205)

Expressions of phobia and mania could, in such contexts, appear commensurable, even continuous. All of this existed, moreover, without there being any clear role for desire or sexual impulse to play. "I had no inclination toward men," the individual proceeds. "But I remember that I was somewhat lovingly attached to a very handsome friend with a girl's face and dark hair, though I think I had no other wish than that we both might be girls." Of interest to physicians during this period were the infinite permutations an interplay of fascinations could take, which might yet discard or keep at bay all imperatives to mate selection, finding it at times impossible, finding it at other times entirely beside the point.

#### **HOMEOPATHIC GENDER IN *A MORTAL ANTIPATHY***

Despite gynophobia's apparent intractability, Oliver Wendell Holmes believed the diagnosis to be an important breakthrough and believed, moreover, that his novel might supplement other physicians with practical insights. Nevertheless, scholars have yet to explore *A Mortal Antipathy* in relation to this immediate context. Thus, in shifting to an

analysis of the novel, my goal will be to explore how Holmes wields gynophobia, as a nascent diagnosis, to frame a logic of sexual failure. Ultimately, such a line of inquiry compels us to ask what must happen for “womanliness” to be regarded not just as a subject of persistent fear, but also as a thing requiring desire—while also being the ultimate sign of one’s successful cure, insofar as it must materialize in proper relation to Maurice in order for him to be deemed well. It will be my argument that *A Mortal Antipathy* handles gender as both a material contaminant and a substantive form of psychiatric treatment, in order to negotiate the terms of a therapeutic model premised on converting sexual deficiency into healthy attraction. While Maurice’s gynophobia is triggered by the presence of women, that is, it will also turn out to have been solved by that presence. In studying this appropriation of gender as cause and cure, I will make two overarching arguments. The first is that Holmes effectively translates to the realm of neurology and psychiatric health a genre of medical treatment that had been popular for much of the nineteenth century: the theory of homeopathy, generally credited to Samuel Hahnemann beginning in 1796, which held that a disease could be treated with a diluted measure of the substance that first produced it. While Holmes comes closer, arguably, to what behavioral psychologists would later term “flooding,” a mode of treatment by which one is thrown into sudden, dramatic proximity with one’s phobic stimuli, the rationale of the conversion therapy proposed may be classed as belonging to a kind of homeopathic spectrum. Building on this argument, I go on to suggest that Holmes’s novel illustrates how early sexual conversion therapy in the U.S. depended not just on the isolation of sexual phobia for treatment, but moreover on a reinstatement of what we might today

identify as cisgender stability and continuity, tethered to expressions of socially sanctioned desire.

A facetious article published in 1878, which went on to be widely circulated afterward, had already begun to play with the idea that sexology was translating matters of deviance to the terrain of old homeopathic equations.<sup>64</sup> With a sarcasm that becomes increasingly evident as the article proceeds, the author begins, “It has been discovered of late years, that many habits and conditions of the body and mind are really diseases.” The piece goes on to fabricate the “very latest discovery”—one introduced by a “distinguished German homoeopathist” he names “Dr. Steinerkopf” whose latest publication is titled “Gynaia, its Symptoms and Treatment.” A disease affecting “effeminate” men, gynaia is said to involve, in most cases, timidity, excitability, aversions to “tobacco and dogs,” as well as a general aspect of “womanliness.” For its cure, Dr. Steinerkopf recommends, in true homeopathic fashion, “womanliness itself in extremely attenuated doses.” To “procur[e] the mother tincture,” the physician is said to have searched for a woman swimming by herself in the Atlantic Ocean. Upon discovering one such woman, the physician took a glass vase, “waited for ten minutes to elapse,” charged at the stranger, “scooped up a gallon of water” in her vicinity, and afterward prepared a serum from the “high dilution of girl” titled “Puella domestica, 50<sup>th</sup>.” By this measure, did the imaginary doctor successfully discover gynaia’s cure.

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<sup>64</sup> For its various instances of publication, see “A Doctor’s Diluted Delusion.” *Burlington Weekly Free Press* (August 09, 1878): 1; “Homoeopathic Doses of Lovely Woman.” *Obstetric Gazette* (1879): 332; and other reprints in *The Richmond and Louisville Medical Journal* in 1878; *Michigan Medical News* in 1878; *The Chicago Medical Times* in 1879; *St. Louis Clinical Record* in 1879; *New York Medical Journal* in 1889; *Pacific Medical Journal* in 1889; *International Record of Medicine and General Practice Clinics* in 1889; and multiple others.

A glib dismissal of psychiatry's interest in gender, the "Gynaia" article nevertheless latches onto something strangely reminiscent in the new sexology for a mode of treatment elsewhere defunct. That is, in spite of itself, the article undoes positivist perceptions of gender at the exact moment psychiatrists were beginning to wield its binary logic for a range of taxonomic purposes. Indeed, what makes the presence of this pseudo-homeopathic rhetoric seem especially ironic in *A Mortal Antipathy* is that decades earlier Holmes had made one of his greatest contributions to the history of medicine by lambasting homeopathy as a genre of medical quackery, in his essay *Homeopathy and Its Kindred Delusions* in 1842. Organized around two lectures Holmes delivered to the Boston Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, *Homeopathy and Its Kindred Delusions* endeavors, in no uncertain terms, to put an end to Hahnemann's influence. One of Holmes's primary objections has to do with what he calls the "first doctrine" of homeopathy, which inheres in the law "similia similibus curantur," or the supposition that "like is cured by like" (41). Turning to this doctrine, Holmes takes issue with the strange parameters the rhetoric premised on "likeness" has been forced to obey. "[Y]ou will remember," Holmes writes, "that this principle is, *Like cures Like*, and not that *Same cures Same*, that there is *resemblance* and not *identity* between the symptoms of the disease and those produced by the drug which cures it" (49). Holmes explains the caveat further: "For if *Same cures Same*, then every poison must be its own antidote; which is neither a part of [homeopathy's] theory, nor [the] so-called experience" of its practitioners (49). The emphasis on likeness over sameness thus emerged, Holmes implies, only after it was proven that the dilution of an exact or identical causal agent consistently failed to cure a corresponding illness. Asserting the condition of likeness

over sameness allowed homeopathy to survive in the wake of these failures, with the logic that a diluted substance, once removed from the original offender, performed the special trick. The crisis this stipulation introduces, for Holmes, is that the tautological relation of a disease-causing agent to its cure, on which homeopathy had always rested, erodes the moment perfect identity is taken to be exceptionally ineffective. To expose the absurdity of the “likeness” loophole, Holmes turns at the end of the passage to one of homeopathy’s long-lasting colloquial legacies: the phrase originating in its prescription for hydrophobia, which held that only “the hair of the dog” that bites has the power, thereafter, to heal. “Oh no!” Holmes exclaims, satirizing the homeopathist’s stipulation: “it was not the hair of the same dog, but only of one very much like him!” (49).<sup>65</sup>

I follow this thread in Holmes’s 1842 argument at length, in part, because it demonstrates how the physician brought a rather literary investigation of a representational paradox to bear on his career in medicine. His argument, essentially, is that homeopathy runs on faith in a warped analogy, stripped of all claims to genuine similitude. But the distinctions he draws between likeness and sameness become all the more interesting when we place them alongside the conceptual homeopathy used to treat gynophobia in *A Mortal Antipathy*, in which women are presumed, in the context of Maurice’s diagnosis and his therapy, alike enough to be interchangeable. Ultimately, Holmes’s point in his treatise on homeopathy is that apparent disparities between sameness and likeness as representational modes break down in the context of treatment, wherein a multiplicity of infection (in short, the threat of epidemic proportions) cannot be taken to mean a great diversity of content, requiring a great diversity of cures. Such a

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<sup>65</sup> This is, indeed, where the hangover remedy metaphor originates, as a kind of vulgar homeopathy.



conclusion, after all, would preclude any modicum of efficiency in practice. Rather, likeness (being of the same kind) and identity (being particular to the causal element in question) must, to some degree, be collapsed, in order for medical knowledge to be generalized. At the same time, Holmes harps on this mistake of homeopathy in order to conclude that neither sameness nor likeness makes sense as a circular answer connecting disease origin to disease resolution. Written far in advance of the microbial revolution, Holmes's treatise rests not on a precise understanding of contagion, but instead on his attention to an absurdity of plot: the idea that one should solve one's ailment simply by returning to and re-ingesting something akin to the agent that caused the ailment to unfold.

Nevertheless, Holmes appears to have missed how close his novel premised on gynophobia comes to a comparable tautology. There is a risk, of course, in treating his approaches to infectious disease and psychiatric maladies on the same terms. What I am calling "conceptual homeopathy" is a world apart from actual homeopathy, diffuse and diverse as the practice was. At the same time, insofar as Holmes took issue with the practice on literary terms, as a failure of plot, the concept works well as a lens for considering a similar sequence that transpires over the course of the novel. (These echoes in sexology are what gave the satirical article on "Gynaia" its popularity coast-to-coast, after all.) The relationships between *A Mortal Antipathy* and Holmes's medical thought become clearest once the novel is contextualized in terms of its genre dimensions. *A Mortal Antipathy* is generally studied as the last of three literary experiments Holmes undertook toward the end of his career, which he believed to be audaciously new in the world of letters. Referred to by critics as the "medicated novels," a nickname Holmes

himself borrowed from a friend who “refused to read” them on account of their experimental subject matter, they show the author endeavoring to subject psychiatric phenomena to a literary sensibility (“A Second Preface” vii). The first, *Elsie Venner: A Romance of Destiny*, published in 1861, tells the story of a young neurotic heroine named Elsie whose mother was bitten during pregnancy by a rattlesnake. The consequence, we discover, is that Elsie’s personality is part-woman, part-snake. The second, *The Guardian Angel*, published in 1867, tells of a woman named Myrtle Hazard whose task, as Michael Weinstein notes, involves “ordering and harmonizing the diverse elements of her moral makeup,” attributed to a complex ancestry including Europeans, Native Americans, and witches (93). Published nearly twenty years later, *A Mortal Antipathy* concludes the experiment by turning to matters of sexual disorder. All three novels may be read as attempts by Holmes to connect the world of literature with evolving theories in medicine. In reflecting on an embarrassing stage adaptation of *Elsie Venner* in 1883, the physician clarified for readers in a new preface to the volume, “It is to the mind, and not to the senses, that such a story must appeal” (vii). Each novel functioned for Holmes as an imaginative case history, or what he elsewhere in the 1883 preface calls a “physiological romance,” through which he hoped truths about psychological disease might be discovered via the act of literary creation.

To understand how Holmes intends readers to perceive phobia in *A Mortal Antipathy*, as a disease revolving around an object of fear that constitutes cause, trigger, and cure, it is necessary to follow the novel across the process of elimination by which Maurice’s precise problem is discovered. For the majority of the novel, Holmes uses the term antipathy in place of phobia. Readers are first introduced to the concept when a

snooping Dr. Butts asks Paolo why Maurice “keep[s] out of sight” (58). Paolo responds in Italian, “Una antipatia.” Thus begins a quest on the part of Dr. Butts and others to unveil the nature of Maurice’s antipathy. “Twenty-four hours later,” the narrator explains, “the story was all over the village that Maurice Kirkwood was the subject of a strange, mysterious, unheard-of antipathy to something, nobody knew what; and the whole neighborhood resolved itself into an unorganized committee of investigation” (59). The riddle lies primarily in Maurice’s domestic confinement. “What could an antipathy be that made a young man a recluse!” (58). Dr. Butts initially wonders. “Was it a dread of blue sky and open air, of the smell of flowers, or some electrical impression to which he was unnaturally sensitive?” Echoing contemporary accounts of agoraphobia and claustrophilia, the doctor’s speculations begin with these wide conceptions of an instinctual disinclination for open spaces.

Dr. Butts proceeds to cross possible antipathies off his list. Spiders, foods, and odors may all be objects of antipathy, or of an “instinctive elective dislike,” but these, he decides, cannot account for Maurice’s “singular mode of life” (62, 3). His first genuine hypothesis, then, is that Maurice might be afraid of dogs, a common condition of the day connected with hydrophobia. To test the hypothesis, Dr. Butts unleashes a massive Newfoundland dog in Maurice’s vicinity, only to observe Maurice greeting the dog with a pat on the head (63). Subsequently Maurice proves to be relatively unimpressed by thunder. Next, a person reporting a chance encounter observes that while talking, “A rabbit ran by us, and I watched...but he seemed pleased watching the creature” (70). Perhaps the most pivotal observation before the climactic reveal, however, is the decision that Maurice’s antipathy cannot be generalized to a total revulsion for social interaction.

“[H]ow could any conceivable antipathy be so comprehensive as to keep a young man aloof from all the world, and make a hermit of him?” (92). Dr. Butts asks himself in another passage. “He did not hate the human race; that was clear enough. He treated Paolo with great kindness, and the Italian was evidently much attached to him....It was not misanthropy, therefore, which kept him solitary.” In crossing off the totality of the human race and most animals, however, Dr. Butts finds himself only increasingly stupefied by Maurice’s behavior.

Finally, the disease is revealed to Dr. Butts, when he gains access to two papers documenting the illness. Importing the form of the sexological case study into the novel, Holmes devotes the eighteenth chapter to an autobiographical account of the disease, where we first learn that Maurice fears the presence of women. Holmes then devotes the nineteenth chapter to an interpretive report written by the British Royal Academy of Biological Sciences titled “ACCOUNT OF A CASE OF GYNOPHOBIA. WITH REMARKS” (230). *A Mortal Antipathy* in this way imitates the form of a psychiatric handbook partway through, offering a series of symptoms and conclusions with which one might make comparisons in similar cases. So impressed would a psychiatrist named Charles P. Obendorf be with Holmes’s case reports in 1943 that he decided to publish, through Columbia University Press, a collection of excerpts from *A Mortal Antipathy* and the other “medicated novels” titled *The Psychiatric Novels of Oliver Wendell Holmes*, which aimed to account for all of the ways in which Holmes had anticipated later psychoanalytic discoveries.

Maurice’s self-authored case history wastes no time in getting to the origin of his malady. Here readers first learn how the threat of female proximity became linked to the

inaugural event that brought his gynophobia into existence. Maurice recalls he was still an infant and was being held by his nurse near a second-story window when his cousin Laura, “with all the delighted eagerness of her youthful nature,” grabbed him excitedly and began tossing him up in the air (209). “The abrupt seizure frightened me,” he explains. “I sprang from her arms in my terror, and fell over the railing of the balcony.” Saving him from death, a thorn-bush below broke his fall; but the tumble and injuries inflicted caused the “dreadful experience” to be “burned deep” within his “memory.” “The sudden apparition of the girl, he continues, “the sense of being torn away from the protecting arms around me; the frantic effort to escape; the shriek that accompanied my fall through what must have seemed unmeasurable space; the cruel lacerations of the piercing and rending thorns,—all these fearful impressions blended in one paralyzing terror.” Across his childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood, the disease only worsened and solidified. Any proximity to women caused him to faint and his heart to stop, “until it became fully recognized that I was the unhappy subject of a mortal dread of woman” (213). In the committee’s report we are given the official diagnosis: “we shall have to apply the term *Gynophobia, or Fear of Woman*” (231).

Situations in which proximity to women has caused Maurice to faint or brought him to the brink of heart failure appear in both documents. In these cases, it is reported that all “color” generally “faded” from Maurice’s cheeks (212), that he was left “unconscious” (210), and that he tended to awake only to find his pulse nearly extinguished. In the greatest analysis of *A Mortal Antipathy* to date, Jane Thrailkill has suggested that Maurice’s total incapacity, throughout the novel, to access and solve his psychological condition, originating in a prior traumatic event, offers a valuable

“prehistory to the Freudian conception of trauma, which would construe traumatic experience as a primarily psychic rather than physiological wound” (86). With the caveat that the specifics of Holmes’s approach to “embodied memory” is “not easily subsumed to Freudian terms” (111), Thrailkill nevertheless goes further, arguing that when it comes to the question of treatment what we finally end up with is something akin to the later logic of psychoanalysis, where narrative, as a medium of memory, persists as crucial to subjectivity, yet cannot be accessed by the subject as such. Narrative is fashioned, Thrailkill elaborates, “as that which may be unavailable to the unconscious mind of the person in possession of the memories, who relives [via the ongoing effects of trauma] rather than re-presents the past” (115). The autobiographical and medical case reports detailing Maurice’s gynophobia are, in this sense, analogous to his daily life, distinct only in terms of genre: each text functions to recapitulate Maurice’s foundational childhood injury.

While I am convinced by this argument in part, I would modify Thrailkill’s emphasis on narrative to argue that Holmes indicates narrative explanation can go only so far when the pathology at issue is phobia. In such a context, the only option for cure might, in fact, be oppositional to narrative: the potency of unanticipated shock, where a substantive presence correlated with a subject’s ideational dread confronts that subject without explanation. The autobiographical report and case study do very little for Maurice, after all, insofar as he keeps them stashed away in a drawer for the majority of the plot. Such documents become valuable only to a literary readership capable of using them to comprehend conditions belonging, by contrast, to an oppositional medium of sudden collision, at which point womanliness, as a substantive presence, needs no

narrative to inflict its neurological impact. Of course, for gender to take on this significance, it must do so in tandem with narrative, where its status as substantive, or in terms of dosage, is inscribed into sequence—as cause and cure—and thus made subject to interpretation. But interpretation turns out to be secondary in importance to an underlying homeopathic equation at the heart of phobia's disposition. It is less important, in other words, for Maurice to decipher his condition than for his state of negative passion to be mechanically, involuntarily transformed into positive desire. At such a juncture the right measure of a feared agent will have been the key to converting disinclination into purified attraction.

Soon after the documents appear transcribed in *A Mortal Antipathy*, Euthymia saves Maurice from the burning house, thus unleashing the mechanism by which his affliction will be cured. Just as it seems Maurice will succumb to the flames, the narrator explains, “In a single instant he found himself rolled in a blanket and in the arms of—a woman!” (273). Euthymia carries Maurice to safety. Taking note of the scene, Dr. Butts intuits that the resulting jolt to Maurice's physiology will be his greatest chance for recuperation. The narrator explains, “It was perfectly clear to Dr. Butts that if Maurice could [repeatedly] see the young woman to whom he owed his life” and, perhaps more importantly, the woman to whom he owed “the revolution in his nervous system which would be the beginning of a new existence,” such visits “would be of far more value as a restorative agency than any or all of the drugs in the pharmacopoeia” (277). The great solution thus materializes: that which had consistently brought Maurice to the brink of death will be also the wellspring of his delivery. This solution becomes manifest, as I have suggested, as a female similitude, which at once spans everyone from his cousin

Laura to passersby to Euthymia, yet also appears to vary in quantity and force, insofar as readers learn it is precisely the enormous “shock” of both experiences—a term used throughout the novel—that brings Maurice to an altered neurological state (211, 218, 239, 304). Holmes goes so far as to imply that this female presence is, for all practical purposes, Maurice’s best available drug. Holmes thus leaves us with the miraculous immediacy of a conceptual homeopathy, by which an inceptive agent (the traumatic incident with Laura) is essentially imitated to produce the perfect cure. Equally important in this resolution, however, is the fact that Dr. Butts feels compelled to arrive at such a panacea not for any deviant proclivity, but rather to fix the wrong kind of solitude. The novel thus concludes by picturing a nascent conversion therapy, yet one in which we jump straight from disinclination—which is to say a conspicuous absence of desire—to affinity writ large, climactically restored.

### {CODA III}

#### **A LIVING CASE, A DYING ART: AUBREY BEARDSLEY’S GYNOPHOBIC AESTHETIC**

*A Mortal Antipathy*’s earnest elaboration of Maurice’s suffering begs the question: in the short time span of gynophobia’s modest popularity as a diagnosis, were there individuals who auto-internalized the condition as an accurate reflection of their interior orientation? In a tempting interpretation of *A Mortal Antipathy*, Charles Gibian has suggested that if Holmes had a real-life Maurice Kirkwood in mind, it might have been Holmes’s earlier contemporary Nathaniel Hawthorne. Discussing Holmes’s final conversation with Hawthorne in 1864, during which the former attempted to distract



Hawthorne from his declining health, Gibian observes, “the Holmes interview with Hawthorne has its parallel in his late novel *A Mortal Antipathy*, which focuses on a young man, in many respects a very close image of Hawthorne, whose medical problem is pathological self-seclusion” (306). Gibian goes further, suggesting that Holmes has for his double the charitable Dr. Butts, who in noticing Maurice’s reclusive tendencies felt, as the novel explains, a “natural desire to do all that his science and his knowledge of human nature could help him to do towards bring him into healthy relations with the world about him” (qtd. in Gibian 307). To be fair, Gibian resists making the gynophobia diagnosis outright. Yet while Gibian avoids speculation that Hawthorne’s reclusiveness was connected to a fear of women, he observes concurrently the feminine, even sexual impression Hawthorne made on Holmes. In a tribute to Hawthorne published in the *Atlantic* shortly after his death, Holmes recalls of their final conversation, with obvious affection, “There was the same backwardness and hesitancy which in his best days it was hard for him to overcome, so that talking with him was almost like lovemaking, and his shy, beautiful soul had to be wooed from its bashful pudency like an unschooled maiden” (99). We need only supplement Gibian’s speculation with the fact that Holmes briefly alludes to Hawthorne in his preface to *A Mortal Antipathy*, with insinuations that the novel is dedicated partly to the high literary moment of the early-to-mid 1800s, and the theory that Holmes based his gynophobe on Hawthorne certainly seems plausible.

If we wanted to entertain the idea further, we could add that enough has been written on the resentment Hawthorne felt toward Fanny Fern and that “damned mob of scribbling women” taking over U.S. newspapers, as well as his peculiar and laborious friendship with Margaret Fuller to support the idea that Hawthorne’s experience of

gender was less than salubrious.<sup>66</sup> However, this kind of riddle—was Hawthorne a gynophobe, or wasn't he?—returns us to a central concern of this dissertation, which is whether an affect, pathological or ordinary, can be said to cohere in any meaningful sense before it is called into being by and as language. Moreover, it gets us no closer to answering the matter of whether gynophobia, or European correlates such as *horror feminae*, briefly served as an affect, identity category, or aesthetic sensibility individuals might have claimed for themselves in the 1880s and 1890s. In concluding this chapter, I want to suggest that one of the likeliest candidates for such an identification might be British book and magazine illustrator Aubrey Beardsley, a figure long treated as a pioneer of one of sexology's parallel aesthetic phenomena, the so-called "decadent movement."

That Beardsley conceptualized his art in a sort of phobic register is perhaps one of the best known aspects of his legacy. Indeed, when John Davidson first published *A Full and True Account of the Wonderful Mission of Earl Lavender*—the novel referenced at the beginning of this chapter, which Davidson would later describe as documenting a case of gynophobia in the case of Lavender's sidekick Lord Brumm—publisher Ward and Downey sought Beardsley to create Davidson's frontispiece (Fig. 12). An illustration that has since sustained more interest than Davidson's novel itself, Beardsley's frontispiece shows the novel's best-known plot point featuring a scene of underground flagellation, in which a woman in an ornate dress, decked in flowers, whips a kneeling

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<sup>66</sup> Had Fuller lived to see the days of Westphal and Beard, she might have diagnosed him herself, though she might also have gone with the more comprehensive agoraphobia. In a review of Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales* in *The Dial* in 1842, Fuller derided his writing for its insularity of vision. Comparing the stories to "gleams of light on a noble tree which stands untouched and self-sufficing in its fullness of foliage on a distant slope," and to "slight ripples wrinkling the smooth surface, but never stirring the quiet depths of a wood-embossed lake," Fuller asserts that the stories might "promise more," should their author find himself able to cross the threshold of "his study door" (130).

gentleman, naked down to a loosely draped bit of fabric at his hip. Evocatively, the man's head hangs just beyond the parameters of the image, precluding viewers from identifying any affective response facially—whether dread, shame, pleasure, or some combination. Instead, the affective cues of the piece reside in the figure of the flagellating lady herself, who casually holds her dress up at her partially bared breasts, stares disdainfully at the subordinated individual below her, and rears the three-threaded instrument in her hand backward for a blow to come, poised to commence immediately following the moment depicted. On the one hand, Beardsley's frontispiece clearly engages a kind of eroticism. Yet much like the flagellating women Davidson depicts in the novel, who insist their hobby is devoid of erotic undertones, inhering rather in the satisfaction of a purified sadism, the image orients the viewer's interest toward the driving repudiation of the whip itself. As Murray Pittock writes, "Beardsley's satirical grotesques" present "expressions of the anxiety of exclusion from the normal maturation and development of the human personality" (79). While the Lavender frontispiece proffers a rather lighthearted example of this anxiety, arguably, it nevertheless exemplifies well Beardsley's preference for a sexuality "close to the metaphorical darkness which expressed his own fears." That is, Beardsley gives us a sexuality "odd, deformed, deprived" (79), yet one in which viewers are invited to entertain, rather than pathologize, erotic spaces where the dominant orientation might be one of phobic anticipation.

In a favorite quote among critics, Beardsley professed openly in an 1896 interview, "Of course, I have one aim, the grotesque. If I am not grotesque I am nothing." The *Earl Lavender* frontispiece shows how this grotesqueness cut both ways for the artist: if Beardsley thought of himself and his aesthetic in terms of the grotesque, the

women he illustrated channel this same mood in the terror they inflict on neighboring figures, generally men. Nevertheless, Beardsley's work has yet to be explored next to sexology's late nineteenth-century interest in gynophobia or even phobia more broadly as a variable pathology. It is worth noting that Beardsley appears to have taken some early inspiration, in this regard, from the most iconic contributor to a grotesque imagination in U.S. letters, Edgar Allan Poe. In 1894, Beardsley created illustrations to accompany four of Poe's stories in a book commissioned by Chicago publisher Herbert S. Stone and Co. (Fig. 13). Yet perhaps no work distills Beardsley's career-long interest in an unfolding gynophobic aesthetic better than his illustrations for Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*. Written and published originally in French in 1891, *Salomé*'s entry into English literature was a famously, laboriously joint effort, involving a translation by Wilde's lover Lord Alfred Douglas, ten illustrations by Beardsley, and the skeptical oversight of Wilde himself. In concluding, I want to suggest that the dynamic developed by this threesome, including the diverse directions in which they took Wilde's original text, provide a microcosm fit for exploring which forms of sexual deviance survived the explosive innovation of Victorian sexual science in the last decades of the century, as opposed to those that soon found themselves relegated to a spectral past.

The story of *Salomé* takes its inspiration from the demise of John the Baptist, as communicated in the Christian gospels, in the books of *Matthew* and *Mark*. Daughter of Herod II and Herodias, King and Queen of Judea in the first century C.E., Salomé earns notoriety in the New Testament as the agent of John the Baptist's untimely death. In an act of retribution on behalf of her mother—whose marriage to Herod John the Baptist decried as unlawful—Salomé orchestrates the prophet's execution. On Herod's birthday,

the Princess offers the King the gift of a dance, with the caveat that he grant her an unspecified wish after the dance has concluded. Herod agrees, only to discover in succession that Herodias has convinced her daughter to request the decapitated head of John the Baptist on a platter. Regretfully, Herod grants the demand. Wilde's *Salomé* follows this basic plot, while also taking liberties with the original New Testament accounts. Rather than picturing the eponymous Princess as a vessel for her mother's wishes, Wilde depicts a clever and willful Salomé who concocts the plan to avenge her mother's sullied reputation herself.

Considered practically synonymous with the pronounced eroticism and bastardized *Japonisme* of the decadent movement today, Beardsley's original illustrations did not sit so well with Wilde's publisher John Lane on first perusal. As to why, the simplest answer (the lowest hanging fruit, one might say) is their bawdy display of genitalia. Yet, the nature of Beardsley's perversity is striking precisely because it performs disinterest in desire as an erotic mode. An image titled *Enter Herodias*, for instance, shows Salomé's mother, the Queen, standing defiantly topless in the company of three queer subordinates, one a slouching caricature of Wilde himself. In the original proof, an androgynous attendant at the Queen's left-hand side appears to have caused the most trouble (Fig. 14). With long curly locks and a beauty mark on a high cheekbone, the attendant seems nearly a doppelgänger for the Queen herself from the neck up. Below, however, viewers discover the nude to be bedecked with a modest phallus and a pair of testes lightly dusted with pubic hair. In short, the illustration flaunts an ambiguity in gender identity for which Beardsley's aesthetic became famous. The solution to the publisher's reservations eventually took the form of a fig leaf tied around the attendant's

waist (Fig. 15). Yet insofar as the youth retains the combination of undulating locks and a classic masculine form below the neck, we find that the gender variance characteristic of Beardsley's figures was hardly an element he was willing to surrender. Instead, what has been "fixed" is the attendant's stark disinterest in the Queen, despite staring directly at her breasts—a disinterest originally made evident in the attendant's flaccid member. To put it another way, it is not the presence of a phallus, but rather the absence of an interested erection on the part of the Queen's subordinate that has been effectively expurgated. Of this edit, Stephen Calloway has suggested that the spectacle of a "hermaphroditic" "page," "unaroused by the splendid vision of the brazenly bare-breasted queen," struck Beardsley's objectors as too "sexually tell-tale" in its implications (74). Still, we should hesitate to read in the androgynous figure any counter-queer desire by contrast. As in the contemporary sexology explored in this chapter, the intolerable perversity resides more concretely in the image's bald-faced flaccidity, suffusing the dynamic between Queen and attendant with a deviant ambivalence.

Critics have tended to think of *Salomé* as a masterful representation of the *femme fatale*, an archetype generally defined as a dark seductress whose siren song draws unsuspecting men into her deadly snare. Yet what is perhaps most interesting about Wilde and Beardsley's adaptation of the convention is the way Salomé's motives—that is, why she wants John the Baptist, or Iokannan as he is called in Wilde's play, dead—resist easy interpretation. Salomé's seduction plot, for instance, succeeds only vicariously and through a complex network of interpersonal motives. It is not Iokannan, her victim, that she seduces, but rather Herod. Moreover, Salomé's machinations are less personal, arguably, than they are likewise vicarious, circuited through her mother, the Queen,

whose reputation Iokannan lambasts without rest. The singular exception to these vicarious displacements, in both Wilde and Beardsley's representations, occurs in the play's most brilliant and curious twist: Salomé's feigned courtship of Iokannan, in which she expresses a combination of interest and disgust toward the prophet—provocations Iokannan categorically rejects in turn. Yet even here Salomé's characterization seems almost inscrutable. The Princess effectively announces the duplicity of her advances when she describes Iokannan first as a "hideous" creature: the prophet's eyes are like "black holes burned by torches"; his body is a "cold," "wasted" "statue" (19).

Meanwhile, Iokannan reciprocates her distaste. "Who is this woman who is looking at me?" he asks. "I will not have her look at me. Wherefore doth she look at me, with her golden eyes, under her gilded eyelids? I do not know who she is. I do not desire to know who she is. Bid her begone" (20). In this mutual abhorrence, their interaction takes shape. It is not until Salomé fully intuits the damage Iokannan plans to heap on her mother that she determines at last to balance her repugnance with a rhetoric of desire. In an exchange reminiscent of the three temptations of Christ, Salomé takes a new tone: "I am amorous of thy body, Iokannan!....Suffer me to touch thy body" (22). Yet with each rebuff on the part of the prophet, a new crack seems to spread in Salomé's desiring veneer. "Back! daughter of Babylon!" Iokannan cries, and Salomé replies:

Thy body is hideous. It is like the body of a leper. It is like a plastered wall where vipers have crawled; like a plastered wall where the scorpions have made their nest. It is like a whited sepulcher, full of loathsome things. It is horrible, thy body is horrible. (22)

The exchange continues in this way. Salomé claims to love Iokannan's hair. He rebuffs the advance, and she divulges, "Thy hair is horrible." It is only the desire to kiss the prophet that Salomé finally maintains in their dialogue—a prize she will claim toward the play's conclusion once her opponent has been slain and decapitated.

What then should we make of this performative desire in *Salomé*, in terms of Wilde's dialogue and Beardsley's illustrations? It is widely observed in histories of *Salomé*'s sensational English publication that as far as Lord Alfred Douglas's translation of the original French was concerned—a skill at which Douglas was notoriously lousy—Wilde and his publisher soon found themselves with a disaster on their hands, in need of extensive overhaul. By contrast, Beardsley's illustrations are often considered superior to the play itself, even as the compatibility of his vision and Wilde's has been hotly debated. In arguing for a gynophobic aesthetic in Beardsley's approach, I want to suggest that the sensibility emerges most powerfully in the divergence between the victorious monologue Wilde gives his heroine when at last she holds Iokannan's head in her hands and Beardsley's parallel illustrations. As Salomé stares into the decapitated prophet's face, the monologue Wilde provides indulges in the darkest recesses of a petty vengeance at last exposed. "Ah! thou wouldst not suffer me to kiss thy mouth, Iokannan. Well! I will kiss it now," Salomé tells the head.

I will bite it with my teeth as one bites a ripe fruit. Yes, I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan. I said it; did I not say it?....But wherefore dost thou not look at me, Iokannan? Thine eyes that were so terrible, so full of rage and scorn, are shut now. Wherefore are they shut? Open thine eyes!....Art thou afraid of me, Iokannan, that thou wilt not look at me?...And thy tongue



that was like a red snake darting poison, it moves no more, it speaks no words, Iokannan, that scarlet viper that spat its venom upon me. It is strange, is it not?....Thou wouldst have none of me, Iokannan. Thou rejectedst me. Thou didst speak evil words against me. Thou didst bear thyself toward me as to a harlot, as to a woman that is a wanton, to me, Salome, daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judaea! Well, I still live, but thou art dead, and thy head belongs to me. (64)

As the monologue continues, the dialogue implies that this wantonness may very well be at the heart of it all. “I am athirst for thy beauty,” the Princess cries. “....Neither the floods nor the great waters can quench my passion” (65). Yet this matter of Salomé being wantonly “thirsty” comes off as too on-the-nose—a deceptively satisfying disclosure, which hardly does the intrigue of the heroine justice. In essence, the interplay of repulsions that animate the play, to this point, here evaporate so rapidly one is left feeling almost indignant at the suggestion we are now meant to take the Princess at her word.

Beardsley’s illustrations maintain a certain fidelity to Salomé’s dense and inscrutable affect, by contrast. In this role, they also help cast Wilde’s play in a different light. If Wilde seems to resolve the question of motive too neatly in Salomé’s monologue, Beardsley retains in the illustrations depicting Salomé with the head of Iokannan the disturbing excesses elsewhere elaborated in her characterization. That is, Beardsley seizes Salomé’s diabolical triumph as an opportunity to bring the play’s combination of the grotesque and what we might describe as its camp celebration of paradox and extravagance to its apogee. Far from expressing a sense of self-satisfied vengeance, Salomé looks down at Iokannan’s head atop a platter in *The Dancer’s Reward* with a

vague open mouth, as though both fascinated and horrified by Iokannan's unresponsive countenance (Fig. 17). With her right hand she pulls the head up by its hair, while the fingers on her left hand explore the blood pooling outward from his neck. Most iconic in the image is not so much what Salomé discloses in her disposition about the motive for Iokannan's execution but rather the depiction's overarching mood. The obscene beauty of Iokannan's hair flowing into his blood, echoed in the billowing folds of Salomé's melodramatic cape, draw the viewer into the disturbing carnality of an intoxicating terror. Here we have something akin to what Susan Sontag describes in her iconic essay "Notes on Camp" as camp's quality of being a "decorative art, emphasizing texture, sensuous surface, and style at the expense of content" (Sontag). In short, Beardsley aestheticizes Salomé's villainy to such a hyperbolic extent that the question of motive begins to appear superfluous.

It is important to note that this decorative sensuality is exactly the thing that gave many of Beardsley's critics pause as they reviewed the work. Some thought the artist was poking fun at Wilde. A review published by *The Times* on March 8, 1894, offered the following assessment:

As for the illustrations by Mr. Aubrey Beardsley, we hardly know what to say of them. They are fantastic, grotesque, unintelligible for the most part, and, so far as they are intelligible, repulsive. They would seem to represent the manners of Judea as conceived by Mr. Oscar Wilde portrayed in the style of Japanese grotesque as conceived by a French decadent. The whole thing must be a joke, and it seems to us a very poor joke.

Another critic writing for the *Saturday Review* called Beardsley's contribution a "derisive parody," which blatantly put Wilde "on the rack." "There are ten plates in the book, besides two ornamental borders," the review went on to say, "and we know not one of these will help the serious seeker after dramatic truth. Mr. Beardsley laughs at Mr. Wilde."<sup>67</sup> These reviews pick up on Beardsley's humor well enough; however, they seem to have missed the way Beardsley illustrates a grotesque comedy—a gothic iteration of a camp sensibility—already integral to Wilde's play. Indeed, what Beardsley manages to preserve in spite of Wilde's concluding indulgences, I would argue, is a pleasure that revels in a gynophobic horror. Beardsley conveys as much in the interplay between his second illustration of Salomé and Iokannan's head and its devious title *The Climax* (Fig. 18). At this moment in the text, Wilde's drama concludes in a dark reversal of comedic expectations—a kind of anti-marriage, in which Salomé is at last united with the object of her desire, only now decapitated. Medusa-like, Salomé floats above the blood of Iokannan, which slinks in white pools against the black backdrop below. In Beardsley's original drawing of the scene, Salomé speaks in Wilde's original French, "J'ai baisé ta bouche, Iokannan. J'ai baisé ta bouche." The translation appearing in English reads, "I have kissed thy mouth, Iokannan. I have kissed thy mouth." Yet, we should note that the *double entendre* of the original French would have implied also the vernacular: "I have fucked thy mouth, Iokannan. I have fucked thy mouth." Even so, Beardsley refuses us the scene of contact itself, showing us only the before and after. Indeed, the title, "The

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<sup>67</sup> As Miriam J. Benkovitz notes, this question over whether Beardsley meant to poke fun at his collaborator was prompted largely by the caricatures of Wilde appearing in his illustrations. Benkovitz suggests these caricatures should be seen as "the playfulness of an impudent boy, one who found life a 'great game'" (83). I would add that in this playfulness there's a trace of admiration to be found, which has sometimes escaped scholarly recognition.

Climax,” would seem to be deliberately satirical on Beardsley’s part, since it is in an earlier (originally expurgated) illustration, *The Toilette of Salomé*, that the Princess appears to be masturbating (that is, reaching a climax of her own making) in the company of her doting, androgynous subordinates (Fig. 16). In *The Climax*, by contrast, we discover no suggestion of sexual pleasure, but rather Salome’s deadly power—what Erin Smith has called Beardsley’s interest in men’s terror of “female superiority”—at its height. Salomé’s literal suspension mid-air echoes the way Beardsley keeps a phobic orientation in play well beyond the pair’s fleeting, disillusioning consummation. What matters is not the kiss, but rather Salomé’s triumph. Her terror, transcending the realization of her objective, is preserved in Beardsley’s post-coitus representation: in promising onlookers in the past-tense, “I have fucked,” the Princess seems to promise equally a foreboding future, “And I will fuck again.”

## CONCLUSION

Historically, of course, the legacy of Wilde’s eroticism (however oversimplified in popular memory) won out. Wilde has since become the Victorian poster-aesthete for a homosexual love that could not speak its name; meanwhile, Beardsley’s gynophobic sensibility would be hard-pressed to find a modern identity correlate. This matter of sexual alterity returns us to the broader theme of this chapter: taken together, how should Beard, Holmes, and Beardsley’s mutual interest in gynophobia (as pathology, as identity drama, and as an aesthetic) inform our understanding of sexuality in the 1880s and 1890s and the loss of various available orientations afterward? As I discuss in my reading of *A Mortal Antipathy*, Holmes illustrates, in spite of his stated mission, the crude uses of gender that went into defining femaleness as an object of phobia, as pathologies of sexual

unselection were beginning to cohere in medical literature as conditions to be treated and solved. In presenting a homeopathic cure for Maurice's sexual deficiency, Holmes also shows how prescriptions of "like for like" were beginning to be adopted for the treatment of a psychic state defined, ironically, by its very incapacity for *liking*: the sexual antipathy, or that failure of feeling for which a proliferation of inhibitions and disinclinations were enumerated by sexologists. This conceptual opposition between homeopathy and antipathy becomes all the more interesting when we find that by the end of the century Westphal's *contrary sexual feeling* was being translated in new English editions of *Psychopathia Sexualis* as "antipathic sexual instinct," while at the same time the term was becoming fully enmeshed with definitions of homosexuality. In concluding, I want to argue that homosexuality, as a newly cohering orientation and concept, provided an etymological cure of its own in this sense, reframing a concept that had originally been a question of unselection into a form of selection. This new iteration of sexual selection took on an air, simultaneously, of being a double affirmation: an affirmation not only of want, but of *wanting sameness*. To put it another way, homosexuality offered a homeopathic cure in language—a dose of "same-feeling" to borrow the literal meaning of homeopathy's parts, *homeo* and *pathos*—for a state that had long stood out for consisting, rather, in a failure of desire to materialize.

Before our modern lexicon revolving around "homophobia" could emerge as such, this shift had to commence. After years of representing an iteration of deviance, by which individuals resisted the imperative to sexual selection, phobia began to be associated with mechanisms of repression and self-denial, intrinsically at odds with sexual progressivism. This irony should not be lost on historians of sexuality. Another

fleeting late Victorian contribution to the conversation may make the irony of phobia's exile from deviance clearer still. In 1875, *Harper's Weekly* published a caricature of a man suffering in his studio from a case of what the artist, Thomas Nast, dubs "homo-phobia" (Fig. 19). Appearing nearly a century in advance of its later affiliation with gay liberation, this homo-phobia appears to attack its victim with a dread of being *agreeable*, which is to say a dread of affirming "sameness" of opinion with politicians or with the press. Depicting a studious, well-dressed professor surrounded on all sides by newspaper clippings, apparently snipped by a pair of scissors held open in his left hand, and pasted on his office walls, top-to-bottom, the illustration gives the impression we are being given access to the interior conflict pervading the professor's mind. The clippings lead us in paradoxical directions: "We are infallible," one headline reads, while another commands, "Let us find fault." One poster shows President Ulysses S. Grant with rays of light shooting gloriously from his head; another depicts a sloppily dressed, cigar-smoking Grant as "Our Target." The professor's mother studies the scene with concern. "Nothing seems to please him," she despairs, a sentiment the academic affirms in his unrelenting analysis of the documents closing in on him. What makes the image striking, then, is the way this earlier homo-phobia essentially plays upon a deviant sociality phobia was beginning to acquire in the transatlantic literature on sexology. In the following decades, gynophobia, *horror feminae*, and other such concepts made it possible to take this kind of deviance seriously. In this sense, we could say that *Harper's Weekly's* satirical homo-phobia shows us, rather presciently, the ghost in the machine of modern homosexuality as it has evolved since: a deviant resistance to agreeability, historically subordinated to a compulsory affinity now oriented around gender agreement.

As noted earlier in this chapter, a brief history of gynophobia shares much in common with Benjamin Kahan's history of celibacy as a multifaceted and politically motivated orientation in its own right. Speaking to common misinterpretations that have shrouded celibacy in ulterior motives, in the context of queer theory especially, Kahan observes that the "indeterminacy" of identity celibacy permits "is precisely what makes celibacy such a suspect sexual identity—outside of ecclesiastical institutions (themselves seen as old-fashioned), celibacy fails to fit into modern frameworks of determined and determinate sexuality" (6). Kahan notes further, "In the rare instance where celibacy is understood as an identity (as opposed to being seen as an absence of sexuality), scholars usually understand it as a placeholder that does not have a particular content or a particular character the way that other sexualities do" (6). Similarly, gynophobia has a history of being interpreted as a form of repression lateral to and indicative of some other positive content, generally homosexuality. At the same time, these texts documenting diagnoses of and identifications with gynophobia add something new to the cutting-edge scholarship being done on celibacy and asexuality presently. On the one hand, in describing a sexuality that has none of the grandiosity of a deliberate ethic of restraint—consisting rather in the banal immediacy of being regularly turned off—gynophobia attests to a diversity in scale as to how celibacies and asexualities inhabit and shape the public sphere. Moreover, gynophobia, as a feeling and aesthetic starkly discontinuous with misogyny in the 1880s and 1890s, invites us to imagine a feminist and queer politics that might have some use for a disposition that has long been demoted to a psychic reservoir of oppressive instincts. This disposition is not the same as queer antisociality, *à la* Lee Edelman and Leo Bersani *per se*; rather it describes a way of being social, almost

in spite of itself. This phobic sociality carries a potential to draw rifts through an under-scrutinized ethic of compulsory affinity—an imperative that has long made possible, to give one example, the use of rhetorical appeals to the institution of heterosexual love to naturalize and ornament patriarchal power. Here resides the curious sympathy linking *A Mortal Antipathy*'s Maurice; Beardsley's illustrations for Davidson's *Earl Lavender* and Wilde's *Salomé*; as well as the gynomaniacs in Krafft-Ebing and elsewhere who feared women, not for their strangeness but out of envy. In each, gynophobia challenges a compulsory heterosexuality most profoundly by, imagining a counterintuitive deviance rooted in "negative passion[s]"—a deviance defined not by its drive to consummation, but rather as suspension, diversion, and, most evocatively perhaps, a phobic orientation enmeshed with new permutations of gender variance.



## CHAPTER 5

### TOWARDS AN AGE OF MYSOPHOBIA:

#### MICROCONTAMINATIONS IN SILAS WEIR MITCHELL'S "CAT FEAR"

#### SURVEYS, MARK TWAIN'S *THREE THOUSAND YEARS AMONG THE MICROBES*, AND ZORA NEALE HURSTON'S *THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD*

Less and less frequently do we encounter people with the ability to tell a tale properly. More and more often there is embarrassment all around when the wish to hear a story is expressed. It is as if something that seemed inalienable to us, the securest among our possessions, were taken from us: the ability to exchange experiences. One reason for this phenomenon is obvious: experience has fallen in value. And it looks as if it is continuing to fall into bottomlessness.

- Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller" (1936)

During the early hours of December 2, 1885, panic struck Newark, New Jersey. A large black dog, "foaming at the mouth," was discovered tearing through the streets. Carnage lined its path. At least seven other dogs fell victim to its rampage. According to one witness, the dog even tried to break into someone's house. As *Forest and Stream* reported, the dog "sprang upon a stoop," "gnashed" at the door, bit off "a portion of the moulding" in its jaws, and minced the wood "to splinters" (381).<sup>68</sup> By the joint efforts of an individual armed with a shotgun and another with an axe, the antagonist was finally put down. Still, the damage wrought by the tirade continued to unfold. A number of local dog owners in the vicinity put their pets down out of suspicion they might have been infected. The Mayor of Newark went further, authorizing local police to kill any dog running without a muzzle in public. Rumors spread that an underground "poisoning committee" had taken the liberty of poisoning other vulnerable dogs around town. Most

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<sup>68</sup> "The Newark Dog Scare." *Forest and Stream*, 10 Dec. 1885, p. 381.

alarming to the community, however, was yet another consequence. Before being killed, the offending canine had managed to bite six of Newark's children. Another iteration of hydrophobia's maddening riddle commenced: Were the children infected? Was the rabid poison working surreptitiously beneath their skin? Or perhaps the dog had never been rabid at all. Perhaps it had been seized by an unfortunate spell of violence, and the children would be just fine.

There was also a new bit of knowledge in the air. In the preceding weeks, the French physician Louis Pasteur claimed to have discovered a new antidote for hydrophobia: an inoculation, which, if administered after a rabid attack and before the manifestation of symptoms, could prevent the disease from commencing entirely. A local physician suggested that if funds could be gathered the children's best chance would be to sail for Paris and to meet the physician himself. A cable was sent to Pasteur, asking whether he would be willing to see them. His reply was swift: "Si croyez danger envoyez enfants immediatement." The donations came, in the form of money as well as clothing appropriate to their transatlantic crossing. Ultimately, it was decided that four of the children had been wounded seriously enough to warrant the trip. Within a week of the attack they had become local celebrities. By December 9<sup>th</sup>, the *New York Sun* and *New York World* would publish pictures of all four: Eddie Ryan, Patsey Reynolds, Austin Fitzgerald, and Willie Lane (ages five, seven, ten, and thirteen respectively). By December 10<sup>th</sup>, just over a week following the attack, the boys had embarked for Le Havre, accompanied by Eddie's young brother and mother (said to be eight months pregnant at the time), as well as a physician by the name of Dr. Billings. By the evening of December 21<sup>st</sup>, all four children had been inoculated in Pasteur's personal laboratory.

By the 22<sup>nd</sup>, the good news had made it to the pages of the *New York Times* and *New York Herald*. As Bert Hansen has demonstrated in his detailed history of the event, at this juncture, via four unlikely heroes hailing from Newark, Pasteur's reputation grew exponentially on the other side of the Atlantic. As Hansen puts it, the "sensation" effectively "catapult[ed]" Pasteur and the medical innovations he represented to "celebrity across North America" (374).

This is not to say the ordeal was without critics, or that previous conceptions of hydrophobia explored in this dissertation did not survive the Pasteurian turn. On December 10<sup>th</sup>, one editorial observed that the utter sensationalism of the affair would likely produce death by spurious insanity before they ever reached the French coast. "It would have...been far more humane to victims," the writer maintains, if Pasteur's system could have been communicated by cable and "followed out to the letter" on the families' home turf ("Newark Dog Scare" 381). "The scheme of sending young children on a three-thousand mile journey, when they are already wild with fear," the piece concludes, "will probably cause the death of several of them or cause them to become insane." The next year, new accounts of spontaneous hydrophobia were still finding publishers. In April 1886, New York's *Medical News* claimed a young physician by the name of Dr. Warner had died of "spurious hydrophobia" after suffering a bite from a small dog he saved from a wagon incident the previous Christmas. Nevertheless, an unprecedented transformation in medical knowledge, around rabies and the nature of contagious disease in general, had begun to take effect. Most importantly, Pasteur's rabies vaccine had helped to fashion a microbial imagination, which is to say a way of picturing disease as the work of invisible agents, in the minds of U.S. medical and popular readerships alike.

Pasteur's vaccine reminds us that, independent of the archives I have aimed to recover in this dissertation, hydrophobia has long held a privileged place in the history of medicine. As Neil Pemberton and Michael Worboys note in their history of rabies in Britain, Pasteur's discovery of a vaccine for the disease holds for many the "iconic status" of "being the world's first modern, medical breakthrough" (2). In addition to inspiring subsequent vaccines based on the principles Pasteur laid forth, the advent of the rabies vaccine would contribute invaluable to the germ theory of disease, to the solidification of microbiology as a science, and to the eventual detection of viruses as a unique class of infectious agents in the 1890s. The vaccine's introduction and the rise of Pasteurism generally are often therefore framed in terms of what Thomas Kuhn famously termed "scientific revolutions": medicine could "no longer evade" the "anomalies"—in this case, a proliferation of microbial identifications—with which the "existing tradition of scientific practice" became saturated (Kuhn 6).<sup>69</sup> Thus, even Bruno Latour admits in *The Pasteurization of France* (1988), a book intended to account for "science in action" as irreducible to the sudden arrival of individual genius, that his focus on Pasteur is motivated by the "radical, unchallengeable scientific revolution" in "medicine, biology, and hygiene" with which the physician is associated: "one that has profoundly transformed society and yet owes it very little" (8). While the rabies vaccine is just a part of the story Latour goes on to tell, readers may conclude from his interest in nonhuman agents of social transformation (an interest clearly advertised in his chapter titled "Strong Microbes and Weak Hygienists") that even as Latour gives a plethora of actors their due,

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<sup>69</sup> Such anomalies constitute, for Kuhn, "the tradition-shattering complements to the tradition-bound activity" of what he calls "normal science," or science in its anterior state.

distributing agency far and wide, rabies remains for him an important node from which subsequent transformations in medicine would later proliferate.

At the same time, while scholars have explored the significance of the Pasteurian shift, in both its transatlantic and U.S. contexts, these histories have neglected the corresponding repercussions Pasteur's vaccine had for the understanding of phobia as mental illness. The disease that had become practically synonymous with phobia in previous decades was now being recast as something quite separate. With an emphasis on the changes this previous relationship would undergo, this final chapter explores the phenomenon of disentanglement—of affective disassociation—that ensued. Specifically, I will make the argument that one emergent phobia of the late nineteenth century, first documented in a paper by U.S. neurologist William Hammond, becomes especially useful for understanding how the rise of microbiology influenced evolving conceptions of phobia: a dread of filth known as *mysophobia*. Denoting a dread of invisible contaminations and contagions facilitated by unwanted contact, mysophobia registered, sometimes implicitly, at other times explicitly, a new sociality of microbes, ubiquitous in the most quotidian engagements of civilized life. In dialogue with this mysophobia, a new body of medical, literary, and political texts began to emerge, dedicated to reconciling the ramifications of the microbe as an agent, at once a harbinger of death and suffering in myriad forms, while also being at the edge of perceptible life. To explore the influence of this concept in various scenes of knowledge production and creative expression, this chapter will begin by exploring transatlantic writing on an emergent symptomatology of mysophobia, then subsequently shift to explore related theories pertaining to phobia as a state of mind, especially Silas Weir Mitchell's 1905 essay on

“cat fear,” titled “Of Ailurophobia and the Power to be Conscious of the Cat as Near, When Unseen and Unheard.” Toward the middle of this chapter, I shift to an exploration of microbiology’s influence on definitions and new permutations of phobia in Mark Twain’s *Three Thousand Years among the Microbes* (1905), Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), and John Vassos’ collection of art deco plates, *Phobia* (1931).

***TIMOR CONTAMINATIONIS:***  
**TOWARDS A TRANSATLANTICISM OF MICROBIAL STEALTH**

As a term, mysophobia’s emergence in a paper delivered by William A. Hammond before the New York Neurological Society in 1879 predated Pasteur’s rabies vaccine by a hair. Yet no phobia of the late nineteenth century is better suited to describe the ways in which the relationship between rabies and phobia began to shift following that medical breakthrough. Mysophobia gestured to a state of mind one physician by the name of Ira Russell would refer to in 1880 as “filth dread” (529). In multiple accounts, the diagnosis appears to have served, moreover, as an early classification for what psychiatrists now term *obsessive compulsive disorder*, or OCD. The case history Russell offers tells of an unmarried man, forty-seven years of age and a graduate of Harvard Medical School, who began to experience a new strain of nervous symptoms after an incident in which his brother “died suddenly in his arms,” under circumstances that remain ambiguous in the article (530). Because the case history offers an early moment at which these symptoms would find an intimate portrait, it is worth quoting from the study at length. Russell observes that, following this event, the patient “became melancholic, slept badly, was noted for indecision, imagined his hands were dirty, and began

constantly washing them” (530). These latter symptoms would become the most prominent feature of the patient’s malady. As Russell goes on to note, “He was fearful that everything he touched would contaminate and soil his hands; the chair, the door-knob, in fact, everything that came in his way he carefully avoided touching with his hands.” The individual was at once conscious that his actions exceeded reason, yet “could not resist” the compulsion to wash himself when it arose. Russell goes on to document the man’s nightly “routine.” “Usually,” Russell explains,

he would begin his preparations to retire about ten o’clock in the evening, and it would be two o’clock in the morning before he would be fairly in bed. Before he would begin to undress, his attendant must fill the wash bowl with water, as he dared not touch the stop-cock with his hands; then the water must be let off, the bowl washed and filled again for three times, then he would wash his hands three times, the bowl being filled anew each time. Than after the removal of each garment he must wash, finally he would wash his face, rinse his mouth, each, three times, say his prayers and retire, consuming three or four hours, and using twenty or more towels. (530)

Eventually, the condition became known to friends to such a degree that the man was admitted to an insane asylum. Following this decision, the patient went on to experience a series of improvements and relapses, until at last, by the time of the article, he had begun to feel a stronger sense of “self-control” (532). As to why the condition had commenced, Russell offers relatively few insights. At one moment, he suggests that the condition exemplified a state of “melancholia,” in which the operative “fancy” was that the

individual had “committed” an “unpardonable sin.” Even so, Russell admits in following that, clearly enough, the immediate manifestation of the disease pertained not to “moral defilement,” but rather to “physical defilement” (533). As far as the patient’s history was known, in other words, we may conclude this man was no Lady Macbeth; rather, here existed an individual whose compulsion to wash was motivated, in some large portion, by a genuine dread of material filth.

The question Russell’s case history inspires is whether there’s anything to be made of the contemporaneity of the Harvard-trained physician’s mysophobia and the rise of the germ theory of disease, which was in rapid acceleration at the time his symptoms commenced. There are reasons to consider the possibility, in other words, that the rise of mysophobia—and the genealogy with obsessive compulsive disorder to which it gestures—is discovered in this literature to be properly historical, as a condition coterminous with a major sea change in medical science, and perhaps even a remarkable index of microbiology’s looming triumph. This is not to say reported cases of mysophobia from this period deal exclusively in a fear of germs. Another narrative, for instance, describes an “unmarried” man in his forties in St. Louis who could not be convinced he did not stink, and was convinced other people characterized him as having a repugnant odor, “despite washing his feet, arm-pits, and person elsewhere often” (Dean & Hughes 25).<sup>70</sup> Yet even a case like this should not be hastily disentangled from grander changes in hygienic standards, with which the germ theory of disease was fundamentally imbricated.

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<sup>70</sup> Dean, D.V., & C.H. Hughes. “Arrested Prodromal Insanity with Auditory Hallucinations and Auto-Mysophobia.” *Alienist and Neurologist*, vol. 2, no. 1, Jan. 1, 1881, pp. 25-28.



In fact, one of the most curious characteristics of the literature on mysophobia—as well as a more capacious body of literature in which phobias of “touching” or being “contaminated” were considered—is that the language seems to evolve with and alongside the triumph of Pasteur’s successes in vaccination. Early on, the language patients used made regular use of the idea that their material worlds were laced with “poisons,” which they might absorb if not overly careful. Evidently, this hearkens back to an older discourse, prior to germ theory, in which “poison” was a much more capacious concept in considering disease causation. In an 1879 case reported in 1881, for instance, readers learn of a fifteen-year-old who began to wash himself “excessively”—in his mother’s words “excessively” “for boys”—and who justified the act by explaining he feared that “if he touches anything with his hands it will poison him.”<sup>71</sup> (“*Anything*” later appears italicized in the text.) This language of being poisoned dominates the history: the carpet, his clothes, the paint all threaten to deposit sinister substances in his body imperceptibly. On the one hand, taking the boy’s concerns about the paint especially into consideration, the case conveys a sense of the body’s real susceptibility to what Mel Chen has termed “toxic animacies,” used to describe “queer bonds” premised on vulnerability, infection, and threat, which complicate boundaries of human subjectivity—facile divides between the animate and inanimate, in particular (138). Yet, this language also speaks to shifting conceptions in medical science (and popular perceptions of that science) as to what kinds of agents enact these physically compromising states in the first place. In 1884, C.H. Hughes would report a comparable case, in which a “slender but somewhat delicate, auburn-haired” adolescent, fourteen years of age, distrusting his

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<sup>71</sup> “Mysophobia.” *Medical and Surgical Reporter*, vol. 45, no. 21, Nov. 19, 1881, pp. 573-4.

parents' use of the toxic insecticide "Paris green" to control potato bugs on their potato vines, developed an aversion to all things green: "The green wall-paper, table covers, book covers and carpets, were all regarded as poisonous, and his time was spent in avoiding these colors and in washing away imaginary contamination" (88).<sup>72</sup> Hughes describes the condition accordingly as a comorbid "mysophobia," "toxiphobia," and "verdiphobia," characteristic of a larger category of "morbid delusive aversion" he refers to as *mania contaminationis*. In an 1866 case, diagnosed retroactively by one physician as an instance of mysophobia, another woman reported a fearful fantasy in which she believed "every object" she touched "might have been contaminated by the froth from a rabid dog" (71). The author of this article, Professor A. Tamburini, hailing from Italy, describes the condition the individual faced as a *misofobia*, which had prior to 1879 been known as *del dubbio con timore del contatto*, or an "insanity of doubting with delirium of the sense of touch," as coined by Legrand du Saulle (69).<sup>73</sup>

The 1866 narrative of the woman whose mysophobia stemmed from a dread of hydrophobia offers a rather conspicuously confirmative piece of evidence for the greater argument to which this chapter is speaking: the idea that both a fraught continuity with and a curious break from phobia's historical associations with hydrophobia commenced with the rise of the germ theory of disease. On the one hand, the patient's ailment was not so unlike what physicians had called spontaneous hydrophobia, by which the dread of rabies becomes a pathology in its own right. Yet her ailment also spoke to something

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<sup>72</sup> C.H. Hughes. "Prodromal Symptoms of Psychological Impairment." *Alienist and Neurologist*, vol. 5, no. 1, Jan. 1, 1884, pp. 85-91.

<sup>73</sup> See Professor A. Tamburini. "On the Insanity of Doubting with Fear of Contact: Sulla Pazzia del Dubbio con Timore del Contatto (MISOFOBIA, RUPOFOBIA, etc.)." Trans. Joseph Workman. *Alienist and Neurologist*, vol. 5, no. 1, Jan. 1. 1884, pp. 52-79.

separate, in which a burgeoning cultural shift in intellectual understandings of the infectivity of rabid saliva caused her to be paranoid about the possibility of its invisible ubiquity. More and more, these germ-laden valences of mysophobia would be made explicitly in scientific literature documenting the disease. One of the best examples is a piece published in the *Alienist and Neurologist* by the previously mentioned C.H. Hughes in 1899, titled, “The Trepidations and Phobias of Cerebral Neuratonia: *Timor Contaminationis* (Fear of Contamination).”<sup>74</sup> The piece describes conditions overlapping with mysophobia, which the author refers to as “phobia infectiones” and “phobia contagiosa.” In one example, Hughes tells of a young music teacher who began suffering, during a period of intense stress, from a fear she might contract diseases in everyday public encounters, from walking down the street and riding in street-cars to even the context of dining with a well-acquainted pupil’s family. As with many of the other cases referenced above, she describes as one of her most indefatigable symptoms the need to wash her hands, around twenty-five times daily.<sup>75</sup> Yet the woman has also evidently comprehended the object of her fear as microbial in nature. In the case of visiting

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<sup>74</sup> C.H. Hughes. “THE TREPIDATIONS AND PHOBIAS OF CEREBRAL NEURATONIA: Timor Contaminationis (Fear of Contamination) PHOBIA CHIROGRAPHICA (FEAR OF WRITING LETTERS) PHOBIA INFECTIONES; PHOBIA CONTAGIOSA PHOBIA CONTAMINATIONIS (MYSOPHOBIA, OF HAMMOND).” *Alienist and Neurologist*, vol. 20, no. 1, Jan. 1. 1899, pp. 82-85.

<sup>75</sup> It is important to note that mysophobia was often discussed in tandem with another disease a number of physicians began to observe in the late nineteenth century known as the “doubting malady” or “*folie de doute*.” Specifically, repetitive handwashing was taken to be a sign of doubt that one had washed one’s hands previously; hence, a subsequent ablution became necessary. (For one such article, see: Landon Carter Gray. “WHAT CASES OF INSANITY SHALL WE TREAT AT HOME?” *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences* vol. 97, no. 1, Jan. 1889, pp. 33-43.) The genealogies of both conditions continue to intersect today in conceptions of OCD. For my purposes here, however, I will focus primarily on situations where symptoms became associated with fears of contamination, rather than a compulsion to repeat a particular behavior or responsibility.

Hughes' office for treatment, she explained to the physician that she had determined upon the safety of that environment by convincing herself that he had outfitted the space with the "germ-killers" necessary to sterilize it of potential contagions. In another comparable case, Hughes tells of a twenty-six-year old woman who, after reading an "article, in a newspaper or magazine, upon bacteria" became similarly convinced that "everything about her was infected with some sort of disease breeding germs" (85). Despite washing her hands repeatedly, she eventually became incapable of touching even her child, whom she feared she would infect with some unseen disease upon contact.<sup>76</sup>

Perhaps it is worth noting at this juncture that popular parlance has since traded mysophobia in for another well-known portmanteau—*germophobia*, which, while a very real and potentially debilitating condition, people also quite happily claim as a kind of identity category, which is to say, the state of being a *germophobe*. Thus, the *longue durée* of the pathology under consideration is to some extent rather obvious. In short, the ubiquity of the microbe, intuitively enough, has yielded over time a corresponding ubiquity of dread in humans, albeit along a sliding scale of severity. Yet the point I want to make here is that this "pathology" emerged with a particular kind of force in tandem with an irredeemably transformative break in the life sciences in the late nineteenth century, by which the nature of life and its (im)perceptibility exploded into unprecedented diversities of kind, scale, and multiplicity.

Perhaps no article registers this phenomenon better than a piece translated from the *Journal de Medicine de Paris* by a T.C.M., published by the *Cincinnati Lancet and*

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<sup>76</sup> For another example in which mysophobia is defined explicitly in relation to a dread of contagion, see: Theodore Diller. "IMPERATIVE CONCEPTIONS AS A SYMPTOM OF NEURASTHENIA." *Medical News*, vol. 68, no. 2, Jan. 11, 1896, pp. 38-41.

*Clinic* in 1894. This article begins by observing the pervasiveness of a disease broadly termed “pathophobia,” translating as an irrational dread that one suffers from a disease one does not actually have. Evidently, this broader category captures many of the connotations spontaneous hydrophobia had supplied the phobia suffix in the preceding century. Thus, we should not be surprised that such a case makes it into the article’s list of examples: an instance in which a woman bitten by a dog, who was not afterward vaccinated (for reasons that remain unclear in the account), could not shed her suspicion that she was succumbing to hydrophobia, even after it became obvious she was in the clear. What is most interesting in the article, however, is the way the author becomes preoccupied more capaciously with iterations of pathophobia in which the dread of a particular condition coincides with the doubt induced by possibilities of surreptitious infection and other invisible phenomena. Thus, the author mentions also a case of “syphilophobia,” which, following a one-night stand, continued to afflict its subject until, at last, he took his life. The author goes on to note cases of “spermatophobia,” referring to a dread of losing semen, in which patients became convinced their uncontrollable ejaculations signified a “dribbling away” of all their vital forces. By the end of the article, the author seems to get at the heart of a deeper cultural pulse, observing that “[o]ur bacteriologists and hygienists” have evidently made it their duty to “terrify the world with the specter of microbes,” “seeing them everywhere.” Across the article, we find that the associations between phobia as a pathology and infectivity as a threat began to take on, in the context of an emergent understanding of a microbial universe, a new set of relations. If phobia had consistently since its entry into Anglophone writing referred in part to the dread of concealed pathological phenomena, this relation took at the end of the

nineteenth century largely unprecedented valences, organized around a scalar disparity between a perceiving subject and an imperceptible populace of lethal antagonists.

Only by tracing these changes in the dread of disease and contagion, specifically, are we able to get a sense of why Pasteur's vaccine should have had an impact on conceptions not just of rabies, but of phobia as well. As demonstrated above and in earlier parts of this dissertation, consensus on the nature of hydrophobia and its ideal treatment was hard to come by before Pasteur. In accounting for earlier approaches to disease treatment in *The Pasteurization of France* (1991), Latour emphasizes that physicians and hygienists entertained an unsustainable range of possibilities. Their "rhetoric," Latour explains, was "made up of an accumulation of advice, precautions, recipes, opinions, statistics, remedies, regulations, anecdotes, case studies" (20). Thus, a glut of information was produced, which acted counterintuitively as a vacuum. The "absence" of a "focal point," Latour emphasizes, essentially attenuated "all energies of the social movement translated by the hygienists" into "thin networks, all of them relatively equal in size and therefore doomed to extinction" (22). This plethora of unsustainable strategies, which correlated ultimately in hydrophobia's notorious, as well as enigmatic deadliness, had a profound influence on the way phobia was conceptualized as an emotion—as well as the way emotion was envisioned, as a wider category of phenomenology, through phobia as an exemplar. In addition to bracketing off a sense of earlier, positive valences—phobia was nervous, hypochondriacal, climatological, poisonous, miasmatic, spontaneous, performative, lethal, linguistic, allegorical, gothic, satirical, sentimental, politically inimical, politically recuperable—microbiology's historical break provides us equally with certain important negative parameters. Prior to

Pasteur, hydrophobia belonged to scenes of knowledge production in which its microbial provocation, which is to say its material reducibility to omnipresent invisible agents, was inoperative at the level of language and possessed no substantial imaginative valences.

In order to elaborate on what these changes signified a bit further, before moving onto wider conceptions of phobia at the century's end, I want to close this section with two pieces of visual media, which echo the discrepancies I am trying to get at. Observe, firstly, an image that circulated internationally, beginning in 1885, to illustrate Pasteur's vaccination method. Titled "An Inoculation for Hydrophobia," the picture shows Pasteur overlooking administration of his rabies vaccine to a young boy, implied to be Joseph Meister, the first individual Pasteur cured (Fig. 20). At the center of the picture is a needle in which the injectable substance, made from the spinal cords of rabid rabbits, appears contained. The boy holds his shirt open for the practicing physician, and we are left to presume that we are witnessing the scene at the moment of the needle's puncture. The paradox of the image lies in its function as visually pedagogical, yet dependent upon a content that is effectively invisible—indeed, a virus that microscopes of the day were not yet advanced enough to reveal. When the image made its way to *Harpers Weekly* in 1885, a corresponding article explained: "The person who has been bitten is inoculated under the skin by means of a Pravaz syringe containing sterilized liquid in which a small piece of [rabbit] marrow has been dissolved" (836). The article explains further that through a series of inoculations, each stronger than the one before, "the system becomes accustomed to it." Most important in the picture, arguably, is that onlookers are intended to perceive that they are seeing hydrophobia accurately for the first time, in a state of controlled microbial extraction.

Now consider an image published in Terre Haute, Indiana, by the *Terre Haute Daily Union* some thirty years earlier. Accompanied by a caption that reads, “Applying the Madstone to Arm of a Girl Who Was Bitten by a Rabid Dog,” the illustration shows a physician placing an object on a girl’s hand, while a crowd of adults gazes anxiously at the procedure from all sides (Fig. 21). One of many treatments attempted in the antebellum period, the madstone was not actually a rock but rather a hardened hairball taken from the intestinal tracts of deer. Commonly, madstones were boiled in milk, then immediately applied to the wound sustained from a rabid animal, so to extract all poison from one’s body. It was believed that the madstone stuck fast to an individual’s wound as long as there was poison present, then promptly loosened and fell off once the exchange was complete. Thus, if we have an illustration of hydrophobia in this image, it is in this implicit site of reverse transference: the absorption of a poison, a substance possessing powers to incite a particular madness, by way of the wound where it first found entry. The promise of the madstone was just one thin thread among many to which bitten patients and their family members desperately turned pre-1885, yet, in this very idiosyncrasy, interchangeability, and desperation, the madstone image gives us a useful portrait of rabidity and phobia alike, as they infused one another with particular connotations of etiology and symptomatic progression before a stable cure, and with it an agential identity, at last materialized. When we look back to the iconic image of Pasteur injecting Joseph Meister with the spinal cords of rabid rabbits, we thus find a way of conceptualizing where phobia has moved: a phobia of the disease may still be operative, but it exists apart from rabid matter itself, which, in the boy’s case, has not yet yielded its special symptom, and in the rabbits’ case has long since become moot. Thus, the worst



possibilities of phobia exist, in the context of the experimental trial displayed, only as a yet untold futurity, which the intimacy of injection is designed to preempt. In these subtle disarticulations conveyed by the image, so are we witnessing the origins of a lexical disarticulation, by which these twin pathologies would begin to deviate toward separate afterlives.

**A PHOBIC CORRESPONDENCE:  
POWERS OF DETECTION IN SILAS WEIR MITCHELL'S "CAT FEAR" PAPERS**

The next question we must ask is obvious. It seems intuitive enough to see in the discourse around mysophobia a provocative parallelism with new cultural understandings of disease introduced by microbiology, but to what extent did this really infuse phobia itself with a new epistemology? That is, beyond mysophobia, pathophobia, syphilophobia, spermatophobia, phobia infectiones, phobia contagiosa, *timor contaminationis*, *mania contationes*, and the like—all of which speak to one another in obvious ways—to what extent may other phobias, or the study of phobia at large, be said to have absorbed comparable connotations? The best early example of a major study of phobia, in which we might pursue these questions, is a study the celebrated Philadelphia physician and neurologist Silas Weir Mitchell conducted around the turn of the century. Today, Mitchell tends to be remembered primarily for two other associations, his coinage of the condition known as *phantom limb syndrome*, in which persons whose limbs have been amputated continue to feel pain and sensation in those no longer present body parts, as well as his dramatic failures in treating Charlotte Perkins Gilman in the late 1800s. This latter incident would later be immortalized in Gilman's 1892 short story, "The Yellow Wall-Paper," which dramatizes the misogyny and abuse of a treatment for

hysteria Mitchell had successfully promoted known as the “rest cure.” This approach to treating hysteria, on which much important scholarship has been written, recommended that women be confined to their rooms and prevented from doing anything—writing included, as Gilman’s story emphasizes—and is now believed by historians to have contributed to the early death of William Dean Howells’ daughter Winnie. However, in addition to these legacies, Mitchell committed himself by 1902 to a largely unstudied (and experimental method for measuring) phobia. The phobia to which he turned was the dread of cats, which he termed *ailurophobia*—a term that would also feature prominently in the essay that would eventually emerge from his research in 1905, titled “Of Ailurophobia and the Power to be Conscious of the Cat as Near, When Unseen and Unheard.”

Mitchell conducted his study with a one page survey, which inquired not just whether participants possessed an extreme dread of cats, but explored a range of potentially intersecting phenomena too. In its entirety, the survey consisted of eleven questions broken into two parts (Fig. 22). Part A made inquiries into the presence of ailurophobia in subjects—a condition Mitchell refers to in the survey as “antipathy to cats.” Using the first question to establish the presence or absence of the fear (“Have you any antipathy to cats?”), Mitchell took the next five to glean additional details, asking in 2 and 3 what “feelings or symptoms” the antipathy entailed, in 4 whether big cats (for instance, a “tiger in a menagerie”) made a comparable impression, and in 5 and 6 whether any information could be recalled about the age and context in which the antipathy first became manifest. Part B took a plunge into deeper mysteries, asking in the first question whether participants had the power to sense the presence of a cat “when it is not in sight,

or known to be near.” The second section proceeded by soliciting evidence that such powers of detection were known to exist (Question 2), then asked subjects to specify whether such abilities were attributable to olfactory clues (“Is it the odour?”) or, in fact, subsisted in other phenomena (questions 3 and 4). As with the first section, Mitchell concluded by asking how long such powers had been evident. On surveys Mitchell sent to potential leads directly, he concluded with the instruction: “Please to answer A. & B. with their numbers. Kindly mention other cases with addresses. In dealing with this information I shall use no names.”

An impressive number of these surveys are preserved at the College of Physicians of Philadelphia (which also holds the largest collection of Mitchell’s surviving papers). These surveys suggest that Mitchell derived conclusions from three rather different types of responses. In the most straightforward of these submissions, some entered terse answers on survey forms Mitchell solicited individually. However, others encountered the survey as it appeared in print (Mitchell published it in multiple venues) and sent in responses willfully.<sup>77</sup> Many of these replies abide by the format of the survey, yet are substantially longer than those Mitchell received on the form he circulated personally (Fig. 23). Still others ignored the parameters of the survey entirely, preferring to mail the physician narrative responses (Fig. 24). (Unsurprisingly, perhaps, these represent the most fascinating surviving responses, in that they take great liberties in speculating on the origins and nature of their malady.) Taking all of these into consideration, Mitchell would

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<sup>77</sup> For an example of an ad soliciting responses, see a notice titled “Abnormal Fear of Cats,” published in the *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 119, in 1903. It reads, “Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, 1524 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, desires to hear of cases of fear of cats and of persons presumed to be affected variously by cats when the animal is not known to be in the room. On hearing of such cases Dr. Weir Mitchell will forward a set of questions to which he will desire careful replies” (180).

subsequently publish conclusions pertaining to three areas of interest. These may be categorized as the nature of a participant's cat antipathy, the tendency of that antipathy to be comorbid with powers of detection, and biographical clues (age, family history, and environmental stimuli) surrounding onset for both conditions.

The symptoms reported by participants varied in severity from manageable disquietude to public screaming, crying, and fainting. One respondent, Gertrude Ward, enumerated a complex of symptoms in two parts. Answering questions A.2 and 3, she affirms "Yes," that she is "subject to unusual feelings or symptoms in the presence of a cat," then continues by dividing such symptoms into "(a) Subjective" and "(b) Objective" examples. Under "Subjective," Ward lists,

- (1) Intense fear of being *touched* by the animal
- (2) Uncontrollable feeling that I must weep if animal is moving
- (3) Violent palpitations of heart
- (4) Hot flashes
- (5) Dyspnoea
- (6) Nausea—not constant

Under "Objective," she lists the additional ailments:

- (1) Involuntary start—accompanied by scream—sometimes suppressed
- (2) Tears in eyes—sometimes amounting to a "good cry"
- (3) Very perceptible tremor
- (4) Sudden changes of color
- (5) Panting and sighing respirations

While Ward's response is much more elaborate and self-aware than was typical, she provides a good sense of the wide range of feelings and signs respondents tended to report. Ward's division of symptoms into subjective and objective types illustrates further the threshold subjects tended to convey, separating visible irritations from a sense of interior, potentially invisible panic.

Narrative responses sometimes took a different aspect, accounting for a sensibility of phobia as opposed to a series of afflictions. One particularly eloquent respondent named Frances A. Wakefield mailed in prosaic answers to the survey on July 29, 1903. Answering the inquiry about symptoms, she writes,

It is difficult to describe the sensation. If a cat comes into a room where I am alone I feel as if cold water had been thrown over me, my teeth shut tightly. I cannot even call out, in fact for a minute I can hardly prevent an utter collapse. I think sometimes there must be an unreasoning fear at the foundation of these feelings; for in the open air, or in a room full of people, if the cat does not touch me, there is much less faintness. The touch of a cat always sends a chill over me (1-2)

In contrast to the hot flashes noted by Ward, Wakefield emphasizes a sustained "chill." This rush of "cold shivers" appears in at least one other account. Beyond her attention to bodily changes in temperature, however, what is perhaps most evocative and representative in Wakefield's account is its focus on sharing the space of a room with a cat. This issue of cohabitation was, for many, the central trigger. One respondent explained to Mitchell, "My mind is completely occupied while a cat is in my presence for fear of it jumping on me. I have a sort of creepy crawly feeling which distracts my mind

to the explanation of all other thoughts as long as the cat is moving about in my presence.” Writing on behalf of a patient, an Albert M. Blodgett, M.D., of Boston explained how “the contact of the paws on the floor or carpet” caused the patient “distress.” Blodgett goes on, observing, “the purring of a cat in the room, or vicinity seems to her like the tremolo in a pipe organ.” In such instances, the doctor notes, “She cries, moans, and usually goes into retirement in another room until the paroxysm has subsided.”

Throughout the collected surveys, respondents link this dread of cohabitation consistently to unique powers of ambiguous sensorial or perhaps even extra-sensorial detection. The implication, suggested by Mitchell and concretely elaborated in the responses, is that ailurophobia tends to possess, for its dialectical double, an equally potent capacity for sensing feline proximity without the aid of sound, sight, touch, or in several cases even smell. One respondent, a Philadelphian named Mary, wrote to Mitchell on behalf of a cousin known for harboring such powers. The letter begins, “I hear you are hunting up *cat* stories & I want to tell you of a cousin of mine—a woman as strong minded, and self reliant as any one I have ever known—and apparently afraid of nothing, but with an absolute antipathy to a cat.” Mary proceeds to recount a story impressive for the strange skill to which it attests. “On one occasion,” Mary explains,

we arrived in Montreal quite late at night—and on reaching the hotel were taken into a very long dining room, with lights only at the table where we were seated. [My cousin] suddenly turned ashy pale and exclaimed, ‘there is a cat in this room’—and in spite of the waiter’s assuring her he had not seen a cat since he had been there, and was quite sure there was none

there, she got paler and paler—and trembling all over, continued to say, ‘there *is*—there *is* a cat here’—and after much searching a cat *was* found up in a corner, and at the extreme other end of this very long room. I have always thought this very strange but I saw it myself.

While the cousin’s antipathy is carefully signposted, with reference to her skin turning “ashy pale” and physical “trembling,” the respondent emphasizes more the presence of these special capacities of perception. Ailurophobia seems to supplement such victims with an environmental knowledge and spatial accuracy to which neither Mary nor the waiter is privy.

A number of individuals wrote Mitchell to confirm this peculiar compatibility between phobia and detection. The editor of the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, George B. Shattuck, wrote the doctor in 1902, explaining he had once observed a patient who “realized the presence of a cat in a room with great certainty, becoming pale, agitated and faint, and this even when the cat had not been seen and its presence was unsuspected by other people present.” A cat was at last discovered. While most of these narratives refer to enclosed spaces, another person named Minnetta E. Smith explained that her powers extended to outdoor encounters. “Have frequently had feelings that a cat must be near, and one has appeared within a few moments,” Smith explains. “When walking along the street have seized by husband’s arm and told him that a cat was near. Before long such an animal has been visible.”

One obstacle Mitchell encountered during the study was the difficulty of distinguishing whether such powers of detection lay in sensitivity to the scent of cats, asthmatic reactions, or an impression decidedly more mysterious. Minnetta Smith

ultimately attributes her ability to sense the presence of a cat to smell: “Whenever a cat is near me, whether visible or invisible, I can always smell it; the smell is suggestive of being smothered, or overpowered with ammonia.” Another respondent reportedly tested an ailurophobic family member for such powers by concealing a kitten in an apron before sitting down nearby. No discovery was made “until I opened the apron.” The respondent adds, “then the fun began.” The conclusion for this respondent and others was that a weak sense of smell correlated with a failure to detect a cat hidden from view. Still, a number of other respondents insisted that the power to sense a feline presence relied on something other than familiar olfactory perception.

An attorney from Charlottesville, Virginia, named R. H. Wood, for instance, compares his feeling to an “electric shock.” To explain what he means, he distinguishes the sensation from any feeling produced by a bigger cat species. “The presence of a tiger does not have the same effect on me,” Wood notes. “It is nothing whatever of fear, but only a dread of having [cats] touch me and the least touch of a cat produces somewhat of a tingling feeling, I suppose rather like an electric shock.” Later he continues,

I do not think the odor has anything to do with it, but I am rather inclined to think that it is more of a feeling of abhorrence at a sneaking, stealthy creature, as I know that what may be termed ‘oily, sneaking people’ produces a most unfavorable impression upon me, and I think, as stated above, the very presence of a cat produces more or less a feeling of electrical charge.

Along these lines, another respondent states that his ability to detect cats has been described by others as a “sixth sense.” Still another, signed E. Day MacPherson,



describes the condition as magnetic, suggesting that a psychic antagonism to cats necessarily yields a force from the animal whenever proximity is close. While not all respondents expound as elaborately as Wood or McPherson, many likewise insist that odor has little to do with the sensations under investigation. Narrative evidence frequently concludes with disbelieving friends or loved ones checking a room to assure an ailurophobic person that no cat is, in fact, present, only to discover a cat or kitten curled up in a curtain, under bed sheets, or beneath a piece of furniture.

In the essay “Of Ailurophobia and the Power to Be Conscious of the Cat as Near, When Unseen and Unheard,” Mitchell appears to be most confident in this discovery: that many ailurophobic persons are, indeed, capable of detecting a cat without the aid of sight or sound, sometimes with but also sometimes without the aid of smell. From the 159 replies he received to his initial inquiry, Mitchell concludes that “as concerns thirty-one persons I had evidence enough to make me sure” of such a capability. One point of interest in establishing this connection is the tendency of such a phobia to transcend diverse means of perception. Mitchell explains,

In the first case sight of the cat informs; then there is fear, horror, disgust and more or less of the nervous symptoms already described. In the second set, those who are conscious of unseen cats, some sense other than sight or hearing gives the information, and then the symptoms are, as I have said, much the same as when the cat is seen. (7)

The power of detection corresponds equally, in other words, to the power of an idea over the imagination. Certainty of presence trumps any certainty in terms of exact location, appearance, or perceived malice or intent to attack.

In addition to the surveys we find in Mitchell's collected papers, he quotes from an array of intriguing responses in his essay. In one case, a Dr. J.C.W. recalls he was attending a meeting of "a scientific society," when suddenly the secretary of the society, who had been reading a report, stopped himself. Looking up, he explained, "I can't go on. There must be a cat in the room" (11). Sure enough, not long after the gathered attendees began to search on his behalf, a "under the topmost seat in the amphitheatre was found a cat." Another quoted report tells of the historical case of Revolutionary War General and signer of the Articles of Confederation Daniel Roberdeau, whose aversion was so well known precautions were regularly taken to clear cats from the vicinity of places where he was expected. One evening, upon being invited to dine with Chief Justice Thomas McKean's residence, no sooner had General Roberdeau entered the residence that he informed those gathered, "There is a cat here." When they explained it was impossible, he reasserted the fact and "retired to another room." After a renewed search, a kitten was discovered in hiding behind a bookcase. It is said Roberdeau's mother and aunts enjoyed these incidents to such an extent they regularly hid cats in his vicinity, at which point Roberdeau would immediately detect them. After a protracted sequence of these examples in his essay, Mitchell at last cuts them off, explaining, "I should overload my paper if I were to relate in detail the cases in which cats were concealed in order to test the disbelieved capacity to detect them when not in sight and in which the hidden cat was at once known to be near" (13). "One or two permit of doubt," he continues, "others are unassailable."

It is in this interest on the part of Mitchell and his respondents that we begin to sense something resonant with the literature on mysophobia and microbial dread

discussed above. What interests Mitchell is the idea that phobia describes not merely a state of extreme aversion, but also a hypersensitivity, which amounts more or less to a superpower—an ability to detect signifiers from an invisible world, which the average individual has no capacity to discern. Mitchell proceeds to account for the means by which his thirty-one special subjects reached their conclusion. Only four, he notes, attribute their power to “the odor of the animal.” He thus begins to speculate on other factors in play. “We must admit,” he proceeds, “that all animals and human beings emit emanations which are recognizable by many animals and are in wild creatures protectively valuable” (8). In turning to this matter of invisible emanations, Mitchell gives us a sense of how the rise of microbiology and the world of invisible agents it introduced had begun to change the way inscrutable affect was studied and interpreted. Ultimately, in a rather disappointing move, Mitchell backs off of his connection between phobia and enhanced detective capacities. In concluding, he decides it is quite possible that odor may be the dominant factor, and that those who deny its role are simply picking up on the smell of a cat so faintly it lies below the olfactory threshold that would make it conscious. Mitchell explains,

It seems to me possible that either they smell the cat too slightly to be able to define the odor or else receive an olfactory impression of which they are not conscious as an odor, but only in the form of such symptoms as the visible cat would also evoke. (9)

Nevertheless, Mitchell’s provocation stands. The idea he has introduced is his most compelling one. (No doubt this is why it remains an intriguing element of his title.) To correlate phobia with hypersensitivity is to suggest that certain pathologies of affect exist

because they constitute a heightened awareness of the invisible worlds in which humans find themselves on a daily basis. As with the literature on mysophobia, one implication is that from a post-Pasteurian optic phobia has survived human evolution as a seemingly irrational affect precisely because, in certain cases, it serves as a unique sensorial mode, laying claim to the features of an environment that might otherwise escape normative consciousness.

**CHOLERA COSMOLOGY:**

**SCENES OF STORYTELLING IN TWAIN'S *THREE THOUSAND YEARS AMONG THE MICROBES***

These various changes in phobia's signification, prompted by the rise of microbiology, find a provocative dramatization in Mark Twain's unfinished 1905 manuscript *Three Thousand Years among the Microbes*. *Three Thousand Years* tells the story of a man transformed by a magician into a "cholera germ," and his three thousand years (three weeks, human-time) as such. Thus, the narrative appears before readers as a kind of "History," first written, we learn, in the "Original Microbic," and translated subsequently into English by Twain himself. In his preface as translator, Twain apologizes on behalf of the microbe, whose style (which the translator tells us he had no choice but to preserve) "is loose and wandering and garrulous and self-contented beyond anything I have encountered before"—all of this topped off with a "grammar" that "breaks the heart" (434). Despite these protestations, the cholera-germ turns out to be a rather entertaining narrator—the other germs refer to him affectionately as "Huck." We follow Huck in a kind of travel narrative through the body (from the perspective of the germs, a veritable planet) of a "hoary and mouldering old bald-headed tramp" named Blitzowski, "shipped to America from Hungary because Hungary was tired of him"

(436). Blitzowski, it turns out, is a microbe's paradise: "he is wonderfully ragged, incredibly dirty; he is malicious, malignant, vengeful, treacherous, he was born a thief, and will die one; he is unspeakably profane, his body is a sewer, a reek of decay, a charnel house, and contains swarming nations of all the different kinds of germ-vermin that have been invented for the contentment of man" (436). Thus Blitzowski, to the germs Huck befriends, is also a kind of god: "He is their world, their globe, lord of their universe, its jewel, its marvel, its miracle, its masterpiece" (436).<sup>78</sup> The narrative is thus largely sustained by Huck's play with the idea of a tramp topography. "Our tramp," he goes on to say affectionately, clearly surrendered, Stockholm syndrome-style, to the microbes' hero-worship of their host, "is mountainous, there are vast oceans in him, and lakes that are sea-like for size, there are many rivers (veins and arteries) which are fifteen miles across, and of a length so stupendous as to make the Mississippi and the Amazon trifling little Rhode Island brooks by comparison" (437). Hence, as Huck makes his travels, we learn also that Blitzowski houses many languages, nations, and creeds. The greatest dynasty, we learn early on is the "Pus lineage," so well-respected that "many of our microbe nations have come to speak of pus and civilization as being substantially the same thing" (439). Huck's previous career as a scientist (in his human form) makes him the perfect witness to relate all of these discoveries. All is information, so that by the end of his narrative he has effectively donned the cap of a Pasteur, a Darwin, a paleontologist,

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<sup>78</sup> For his part, Huck finds himself split between human and germy tendencies with regard to Blitzowski. "When the soul of the cholera-germ possesses me," he explains, "I am proud of him: I shout for him, I would die for him; but when the man-nature invades me I hold my nose. At such times it is impossible for me to respect this pulpy old sepulchre" (437).

and anthropologist, with the apparent intent of bringing his reader into sympathy with the interior culture(s) Blitzowski's body encloses.

Beyond its regular descent into inane hilarity, *Three Thousand Years* operates from the perspective of a rather intuitive and potentially useful provocation: should the microbe, as a known agent, transform the way we think of agency writ large, as a force indexing something like subjectivity? Twain's satire and existential quandary overlap in this perspectival thrust: what it would mean, the novel asks to uncertain ends, for one to inhabit or converse with the perspective of a germ, as an agent of a microscopic scale. In this respect alone, Twain is hardly original. The easy indulgences of scalar transformation—*a la*, honey, I've been shrunk to the size of x, y, or z—have a deep history in major works of eighteenth-century satire. Rather straightforwardly, Twain's manuscript happily revels in these predecessors too. The most obvious precursor and allusion lies with Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). Soon enough, Huck befriends a "Dot-Pyogenes" bacteria, "Head of the Pus-breeders," named Lemuel Gulliver, "Lem" for short. It seems possible Twain might have taken additional inspiration from Tobias Smollet's "The History of an Atom," a novel of circulation or "It" narrative," published in the mid-eighteenth century, which satirized English politics during the Seven-Years War from the perspective of an *atom*. A protagonist who happily bounced around from one human to the next, recording everything he saw, the atom shares a fair amount in common with Twain's microbial Huck—not least because they both indulge in size-based pun making *ad nauseam*. (*Ad nauseam* is truly the right qualifier too, since, as I'll discuss momentarily, both take particular pleasure in describing the grossest of bodily functions to which they are uniquely privy.) Thus, it is

worth asking whether Twain is really doing anything very new. The kernel of an idea, after all, seems to be the deeper tradition in satire of testing readerly sympathy to its extreme limits. Early on, Huck performs this matter of strained sympathies himself, explaining that upon his transformation he was not at first pleased, yet soon overcame that resistance. By way of his transformation, Huck explains, “I was become intensely, passionately, cholera-germanic; indeed, I out-natived the natives themselves...I loved all the germ-world—the Bacilli, the Bacteria, the Microbes, etc.—and took them to my heart with all the zeal they would allow; my patriotism was hotter than their own, more aggressive, more uncompromising; I was the germiest of the germy” (435). In this play with a promiscuity of identity, Twain adds his personal touch, but the conceit is not new: Huck’s willing identification becomes, through the looking glass of the novel’s glib prose, our permission to feel deeply ambivalent by contrast.

Beyond these familiarities, however, Twain might very well be up to something new, inspired specifically by the microbe’s revelation as a particular kind of agent. The microbe is not mere infectious matter, after all, but rather represents for Twain a new ambiguity as to what counts as *life*, and with it consciousness, individuality, and destiny. It is by investigating these difficult ramifications of the microbe that *Three Thousand Years* finally begins to achieve something besides an unending string of puns. On the one hand, Huck expresses a certain optimism about the proliferation of life his new vantage point proffers. “To my exquisite organ of vision all this spacious landscape is *alive*—alive and in energetic motion—unceasing motion—every detail of it!” he explains. “[W]ith my microbe-eye,” Huck goes on,

I could see *every individual* of the whirling billions of *atoms* that *compose* the speck. *Nothing is ever at rest*—wood, iron, water, everything is alive, everything is raging, whirling, whizzing, day and night and night and day, nothing is dead, *there is no such thing as death*, everything is full of bristling life, tremendous life (447)

In such breathless meditations, Huck's narrative seems to be gesturing toward something like wisdom, which perhaps only a perspectival shift of this variety could properly convey. This is not to say these moments of optimism shift entirely away from the theme of dubious sympathy noted above, or that they are without humor. In a similar passage, a yellow-fever germ named Benjamin Franklin teaches Huck that, as with life, individuality is everywhere and in everything. By way of Socratic back-and-forth, the cholera and yellow-fever germ impart this truth:

“FRANKLIN,” I asked, “is it certain that each and every existing *thing* is an individual and alive—every *plant*, for instance?” [...]

“Yes,” he answered.

“And is each molecule that composes it an individual too, and alive?”

“Yes.” (452)

Later, this theme of their conversation resumes.

“Tell me, Franklin, is the ocean an individual, an animal, creature?”

“Sure.”

“Then water—any water—is an individual?”



“Sure.”

“Suppose you remove a drop of it? Is what is left an individual?”

“Yes, and so is the drop.”

“Then you have two individuals.”

“Suppose you separate the hydrogen and the oxygen?”

“Again you have two individuals. But you haven’t water, any more.” (453)

Thus it is made clear enough that, whatever wisdom Twain intends to impart, it will not be unhampered by the absurdist conceit driving his plot. Nevertheless, there emerges something like a celebration of life’s infinite mutation, and the glut of a kind of Emersonian individuality and particularity to which that infinity might attest. On through the end of the manuscript, this remains one of Twain’s operative nodes—the promise, as stated in the earlier quote, *that there is no such thing as death*.

Yet this ubiquity of life carries with it a kind of terrible sublime, by which the inescapability of life and of individuality threaten to make all things equally meaningless. The most worthwhile of Huck’s speculations revolve around this centripetal concern. If all things are alive and individual, Huck wonders privately at another moment, who is to say human civilization itself is not, conversely, tantamount to disease? As Franklin concludes one of their conversations, advising his friend to rest assure “this fleeting stay is not the end!”, Huck remembers suddenly he is talking to an agent of yellow-fever. Thus he addresses his human readers with renewed solidarity: “You notice that? [Franklin] did not suspect that he, also, was engaged in gnawing torturing, defiling,

rotting, and murdering a fellow-creature—he and all the swarming billions of his race.

None of them suspects it” (454). With a certain uneasiness, Huck continues,

This is significant. It is suggestive—irresistibly suggestive—insistently suggestive. It hints at the possibility that the procession of known and listed devourers and persecutors is not complete. It suggests the possibility, and substantially the certainty, that man is himself a microbe, and his globe a blood-corpuscle drifting with its shining brethren of the Milky Way down a vein of the Master and Maker of all things (454)

In this manner does Huck’s narrative begin to take a new direction. What might have remained safely allegorical, or at least something close to allegory, by which all of the cholera-germ’s meditations on microbial love, greed, and governmentality might have figured, albeit heavy-handedly, as representative of humanity, here open onto an alternative set of provocations. On the one hand, the point isn’t that we are to take Huck’s consciousness seriously *per se*. And yet, in a sense we are. As the narrative continues to unfold, the primary idea in play is precisely that everything Twain’s readers take for granted as their own, as the domain of human life, becomes unfathomably diffuse when translated to spectra premised on scalar variations. The point Twain keeps coming back to is the idea that something like consciousness is infinitely more vast, as well as infinitely more infinitesimal—and therefore also less precious—than is apparent to the human eye.

It is worth noting that one could discern something cosmic, even potentially comforting from Huck’s epiphany. Nevertheless, *Three Thousand Years* shows that it comes at a cost. The crisis Twain’s manuscript undergoes at this moment is that a

pervasive relation of scalar variability threatens to transform narrative itself into something more or less monotone—which is to say a realm of utter affinity, unmarked by meaningful differentiation. In so far as genuine allegory relies on this latter quality—a structure of difference across which resonances become manifest, essentially in spite of themselves—we find ourselves preemptively situated in Twain’s text, in a universe of infinitely nested equivalencies. To put it another way, what begins as a novel of disorientation is effectively transformed into one of obscene orientation. As the narrator observes in a later moment, if life is everywhere, concealing nested life from within, and therefore eclipsed by greater organisms from without, everything about life becomes reducible to the same sort of parasitical structure. “[T]he inexorable logic of the situation arrived, and announced itself. The inexorable logic of the situation was this: there being a Man, with a Microbe to infest him...it also follows, of a certainty, that below that infester there is yet another infester that infests *him*—and so on down and down and down till you strike the bottomest bottom of created life—if there is one, which is extremely doubtful” (527). Here, Twain, classic storyteller of the late nineteenth century—whether knowingly or stumblingly, it is difficult to say—opens onto a narrative crisis akin to what Walter Benjamin, a few decades later, would characterize as a swelling modernist dearth in a culture capable of telling a good story, or finding an audience to listen. This crisis arrives when information overwhelms a story’s capacity to signify beyond its own content. As Benjamin writes, the story worth telling “does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing” as does “information” or a “report”; rather, the narrative essentially comes into being in the interchange between the story well told and a listener’s capacity to make it

something different, which is to say newly applicable beyond any glut of knowledge communicated.

Benjamin is equally interested in the contributions of the novel, short story, and other print media as historical forces complicit in the storyteller's decline, so there may seem to be a blatant artificiality in the way I have compared Benjamin's concerns with the weirdness of Huck's narration in *Three Thousand Years*. Yet this compatibility actually becomes thematized in one of Twain's most interesting narrative choices: to set up a campfire-style scene, midway through the manuscript, in which Huck begins to tell stories of his human days on Earth to his dearest microbe friends. In these scenes of storytelling, I would argue, Twain makes an effort to reckon precisely with the problem he has introduced—to determine whether there's any story to be made out of a text that has, to that point, resigned itself to around 50% pun-making, and 50% existential meditation on the infinite reducibility of "life." Seated with Lem (Gulliver) and a consumption germ he has affectionately dubbed "Louis XIV," Huck begins by divulging: "*I was not always a cholera-germ*" (475). In the reversal this disclosure puts into motion, Huck begins to tell the curious microbes of another planet beyond their own. The dialogue that follows consists of Huck trying to assure his friends of the veracity of his extra-Blitzowski experiences and their corresponding incredulousness. As though framing the narrative quandary we later find in Benjamin, Lem asks the cholera-germ, "Huck, have you spoken figuratively, or are we [to] take that statement on a scientific rating?" (475). Huck takes the risk: "Scientific" (476). In Copernican fashion, Huck upsets his friends' cosmology; in return they mock what they call his "dream-stuff" (477). Huck protests, "You needn't mock! I *can* enrich your knowledge-treasury as it was

never enriched before, if you will listen and reflect, instead of making fun of everything I say!” It is only by deciding that Huck’s fancies are the sign of a poetic gift that Louis XIV decides eventually they should let him tell his stories without accusing him of falsehood. “Let him alone!” Louis cries to Lem. “There’s neither right nor dignity in criticizing the fanciful creations of poesy by the standards of cold reason, Lem Gulliver, and you know it” (481). It is only by turning what Huck means to be information into the fantastic and figurative that his friends come to appreciate his stories.

What to make of these bizarre reversals in the cholera-germ’s narrative? The structural move Twain is toying with clearly has something to do with Huck’s desire, in the wake of his epiphanies about life, its infinite nestedness, and its scalar unfathomabilities, to share his hard-won knowledge with someone at last. His hope is that Lem and Louis XIV, by communicating with a former human, might find some benefit from the same disorientations he has survived, just in the opposite direction. To his dismay, the germs will have nothing to do with his “facts,” and find their only satisfaction in a kind of Benjaminian refusal to let story time become a science lesson. On a grander scale, Twain is playing with the failures potentially intrinsic to his narrative’s central conceit. Insofar as the germs can only laugh at the idea that they are supposed to be impressed with the limitless scope of the world Huck describes, so does Twain seem to be admitting, more or less, that he is running out of ideas. How many times can one compare Blitzowski’s body parts to topographical features the microbes use for all of their microbial happenings? How many times can one make a pun pivoting around the personification of a disease? How many pus jokes can one make before one’s audience becomes exasperated? In portraying Huck’s failures to make his story suitable for Lem

and Louis XIV, Twain dramatizes and seems genuinely to worry over the motivating riddle at the heart of *Three Thousand Years*: does the microbial epiphany permanently alter what narrative can do?

*Is my story as doomed as Huck's?*, Twain seems to ask. Yet I would argue that still another feature of the manuscript makes Twain's experiment a success. It is the element to which Huck becomes essentially oblivious precisely because his sympathies have been so perfectly naturalized to his world. In short, the first thrust of Twain's text is his strongest: his decision to write sympathetically from a perspective and world clearly designed to elicit repugnance and aversion. To put it another way, *Three Thousand Years* is nothing if not mysophobia's worst nightmare, a disgusting descent into the bowels of the "sewer" that is Blitzowski's pungent playground of organic multiplicity. For all of Huck's apparent progress toward sympathy and unity, this dialectical other remains intact—Twain's reader, who is regularly reminded just how gross the imaginary of *Three Thousand Years* is. Huck's reminiscences of Earth eventually take us in this direction. When he tells his friends that Earth's surface is three-fifths salt water, Lem and Louis XIV scoff. "What *makes* it salt?" they ask. Stumped, Huck searches for an analogy. "What *makes your Great Lone Sea rancid?*" Huck erupts, referring, we are left to presume, to Blitzowski's bladder. With this retort Huck "score[s]" one on them, then explains to his reader, "You see, Science had been fussing for ages over the riddle of what supplies the waters of the Great Lone Sea; the riddle of whence they could come in such miraculous quantity was persistently and exasperatingly insolvable—just as was the case with earthscience in its effort to find the source of the sea's salt-supply" (484). Here, without a trace of syntactic winking, Twain asks his reader to linger with the quandary of where

Blitzowski's pee comes from, and it is in this move that Twain achieves his best effect. Through the façade of seeking sympathy over a microbe's urine-based *Great Lone Sea*, Twain allows the novel's stronger theme of aversion to slice through, catching readers in a game of where their narrative sympathies and aversions will be solicited simultaneously, and when they will be driven to allow one emotion to cut the other off definitively. In this triumph of aversion over the subordinated theme of life's limitless identity with itself, Twain's story becomes a story again. The story that triumphs is the narrative's drive toward a phenomenology of mysophobia, driven against Huck's incessant plea for sympathetic recognition.

#### **INFECTED ORALITY:**

#### **PROHIBITION AND PATHOLOGY IN ZORA NEALE HURSTON'S *THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD***

It would be going too far, perhaps, to say that Twain gives us anything politically recuperable by way of these affective upheavals. Yet the question of what the microbe does to narrative possibility has important political repercussions. In trying to get a sense of what happened, in the wake of Pasteur's vaccine, to the rhetoric around sociopolitical intolerance and the hydrophobia analogy, specifically, we are driven to go still a bit further in the twentieth century, to a novel that has become the most famous for revolving around rabies as a plot device. While Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a close contender for this title, there is still a better candidate, which in sustaining the specter of rabid infection up through its last words makes it the only text to which one could possibly turn in concluding this study. This novel is, of course, Zora Neale Hurston's 1937 classic, inspired by her anthropological field work in the U.S. South, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

*Their Eyes Were Watching God* occurs in the space of a conversation, delivered as a monologue by protagonist Janie Crawford who tells her closest friend Pheoby Watson the story of her life. Janie's character is at once cool and transcendent, even as she defies the expectations of the communities and marriages through which she passes. The rabies plotline of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* emerges rather late in the novel, once protagonist Janie has already moved through two husbands and onto her third, "Tea Cake." Nevertheless, the rabies plot becomes one of the novel's most important protracted metaphors. When the historical 1928 Okeechobee hurricane rises, sweeping away Janie and Tea Cake's community in the Everglades (a topography known colloquially as "the muck")—a storm that nearly drowns the couple—a mad dog manages an attack during the chaos. Leaping from the spine of a cow struggling in the water, the dog tries first to reach Janie; then Tea Cake intervenes. "The dog raced down the backbone of the cow to the attack," the narrative explains,

and Janie screamed and slipped far back on the tail of the cow, just out of reach of the dog's angry jaws. He wanted to plunge in after her but dreaded the water, somehow. Tea Cake rose out of the water at the cow's rump and seized the dog by the neck. But he was a powerful dog and Tea Cake was over-tired. So he didn't kill the dog with one stroke as he had intended. But the dog couldn't free himself either. They fought and somehow he managed to bite Tea Cake high up on his cheek-bone once.

Then Tea Cake finished him and sent him to the bottom to stay there.

The hydrophobia (the dread of water "somehow") thus serves as readers' initial clue to what has transpired in the attack: Tea Cake has been bitten by a dog consumed with



rabies, and will potentially find himself infected as the novel ensues. That all of this transpires in the context of a hurricane adds a conspicuous dramatic irony to the scene—the probable communication of hydrophobia has occurred in a catastrophe where water threatens to overwhelm Janie and Tea Cake on all sides. This spectacular interplay of a deadly hurricane on the surface of the plot and a surreptitious hydrophobia now traveling from beneath Tea Cake’s flesh becomes also the novel’s greatest dramatization of love-as-sacrifice: in saving Janie from the attack, Tea Cake sentences himself to a near and miserable fate.

Hurston uses Tea Cake’s encounter with the mad dog and the manifestation of symptoms that follows to dramatize, in part, social hierarchies of access to medical knowledge and treatment that reach and interact with even the highly localized scenes of remote domesticity Hurston depicts. Tea Cake interprets his earliest symptoms as something essentially spiritual. Early during his onset of symptoms, Tea Cake wakes up in the middle of the night “with an enemy at his throat” (204). When Janie asks what is wrong, Tea Cake tells her, “Somethin’ got after me in mah sleep, Janie...Tried tuh choke me tuh death.” The next morning, when Tea Cake discovers he can no longer drink water without gagging, the prose channels his perceptions: “the demon was there before him, strangling, killing him quickly” (206). Just before seeking out the local doctor, Janie attempts to explain away the malady, speculating out loud, “Maybe it wuz uh witch ridin’ yuh, honey” (205). The doctor Janie tracks down, a Dr. Simmons, occupies an interesting role between intercessor of a more networked medical knowledge and a suspect regional isolation himself. The narrative explains, “The white doctor had been around so long that he was part of the muck” (206). Hurston conveys this in-betweenness in the dialect with

which he gives Janie his professional opinion: “Janie, I’m pretty sure that was a mad dawg bit yo’ husband. It’s too late to get hold of de dawg’s head. But de symptoms is all there.” Yet Dr. Simmons is also the source by which the Pasteurian shift on which this chapter is premised at last reaches Janie. Dr. Simmons tells Janie privately, “Some shots right after it happened would have fixed him right up.” They decide to try to find the anti-rabies “serum” regardless, phoning Palm Beach first. When they learn there is none to be found there, they wire Miami as backup. These questions of regional isolation and metropolitan power dynamics, in which Janie and Tea Cake find themselves caught, will later be translated from questions of medical care to matters of law and incarceration.

Before the serum can arrive, Hurston switches directions, however. The turn the plot takes appears designed to thematize medicine and law and their proximity to isolated regions concurrently—a move building on deep traditions in the *fin-de-siècle* development of a local color aesthetic in the U.S., exemplified in works such as Charles Chesnutt’s *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901). As Tea Cake’s symptoms progress, the novel initially dramatizes a sequence of symptoms that will seem familiar in the context of this dissertation, even as Hurston’s prose infuses it with new effects, detailing Tea Cake’s experience with moments of free indirect discourse. “Tea Cake was lying with his eyes closed and Janie hoped he was asleep. He wasn’t,” the narrative explains.

A great fear had took hold of him. What was this thing that set his brains afire and grabbed at his throat with iron fingers? Where did it come from and why did it hang around him? He hoped it would stop before Janie noticed anything. He wanted to try to drink water again but he didn’t want her to see him fail. As soon as she got out of the kitchen he meant to go to

the bucket and drink right quick before anything had time to stop him. No need to worry Janie, until he couldn't help it. He heard her cleaning out the stove and saw her go out back to empty the ashes. He leaped at the bucket at once. But this time [] the sight of the water was enough. He was on the kitchen floor in great agony when she returned. (178-9)

The passage is moving, in part, because once again Hurston uses the emergent plot development to give readers insight into Tea Cake's adoration for Janie. However, the situation deteriorates further soon after. Tea Cake grows increasingly suspicious, until at last, in a protracted altercation, he raises a pistol to Janie's breast. When Janie grabs a rifle behind her in return, he becomes further enraged. In another instance of free direct discourse, we get Janie's perspective on the new danger facing her: "[I]f Tea Cake could have counted costs he would not have been there with the pistol in his hands. No knowledge of fear nor rifles nor anything else was there. He paid no more attention to the pointing gun than if it were Janie's dog finger....The fiend in him must kill and Janie was the only thing living he saw" (216). At the same time, each pulls the trigger. Tea Cake's bullet misses, landing in a joist above Janie's head. Janie's bullet hits and sends Tea Cake to the floor. When she leans down to hold him in his last moments, Tea Cake leans in and, as his last act, sinks his teeth into her forearm.

In the plot developments that follow we begin to get a sense of what Hurston might be intending by introducing hydrophobia as a dominant theme in the novel. More precisely, we begin to get a sense of how the theme provides her an avenue for contributing to evolving conceptions of fear in the context of anthropological debate. In the paragraph immediately following Tea Cake's bite and death, the narrative continues:

“So that same day of Janie’s great sorrow she was in jail” (217). By the next paragraph, Janie is surveying the scene of her trial: “The court set and Janie saw the judge who had put on a great robe to listen about her and Tea Cake. And twelve more white men had stopped whatever they were doing to listen and pass on what happened between Janie and Tea Cake Woods, and as to whether things were done right or not” (217). Hurston takes care to highlight the unintelligibility of Janie’s life to the jurors, in racial and economic terms. The description of the scenario continues: “They wore good clothes and had the pinky color that comes of good food. They were nobody’s poor white folks. What need had *they* to leave their richness to come look on Janie in her overalls?” The greater question Hurston raises in the scene is this: what kind of legal structure secures an expedient distance between white male jurors and Janie’s daily well-being, yet nevertheless permits their judgment of an act, which will have no lasting effect on them one way or another? Taking in the scene, Janie realizes that before her stand still two additional white strangers, one who will urge the jurors to give her the death penalty—“to kill her”—and another from Palm Beach who was going to ask them to decide otherwise. What interests Hurston in this moment, it would appear, is the collision of largely separate cultural contexts at the nexus of what anthropologists had been commonly referring to in recent decades as a *taboo*, which in the context of a U.S. legal system had been translated to written law: in short, a wife murdering her husband.

The literature on taboos had begun in the preceding decades to be integrated with the evolving psychiatric literature on phobia. Specifically, a comparison of the two concepts, as forces conveying immediacies of prohibition, one socially stipulated and disciplined, the other individual and potentially concealed as interiority, had received

extensive contemplation in Sigmund Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913). Interestingly, phobia, as a variable suffix, and taboo's Anglophone transliteration from the word's multiple variants in the South Pacific (via the posthumously published journal of James Cook), had both emerged and secured notable interest in the late 1700s. Phobia, as I have shown, became a concept that straddled medical, political, and otherwise popular appropriations in the antebellum period. Taboo would be variously theorized in the context of travel narratives and proto-anthropological texts, such as Herman Melville's *Typee* (1836), before subsuming stronger associations with anthropology as a discipline later in the century. In a sense, one could therefore say that while phobia described an affect wielded to describe the social pathologies, primarily, of whites, taboo provided a growing discourse designed to racialize a comparable state of dread in non-Europeans. By the time of writing *Totem and Taboo*, which largely revolves around seeking generalities of human psychology across disparate nations, geographies, and creeds, via the all-purpose vantage point of the unconscious, Freud saw in the two terms a potent and evocative affinity. As we will see momentarily, this affinity would also build on the evolving literature pertaining to mysophobia, or the dread of contamination, which (as noted above) European psychologists had sometimes referred to interchangeably as *délire de toucher*.

Freud explores affinities between the concepts of phobia and taboo in the context of his greater effort to reflect on—and correct—the disciplinary divide between the study of illogical affect by anthropologists, among “savages,” and the study of the same structure in neurology and psychoanalysis among “neurotics.” On the one hand, the text thus relies on a number of assumptions regarding the exportability of psychoanalytic

diagnostics, which a number of scholars have explored at length (a tradition of critique that owes much of its early theorization to Fanon's 1952 *Black Skin, White Masks*). At the same time, we should note that, in this way, *Totem and Taboo* also wields psychopathology as a leveling force, thus overturning a number of racial boundaries anthropological literature had long contributed to fortifying. Freud foregrounds the comparison between the two concepts, observing, "The first and most striking correspondence between the compulsion prohibitions of neurotics and taboo lies in the fact that the origin of these prohibitions is just as unmotivated and enigmatic" (23). From here, he goes on to locate a "touching phobia" as the foundation for prohibitions of all varieties. "As in the case of taboo," Freud writes, "the nucleus of the neurotic prohibition is the act of touching, whence we derive the name touching phobia, or *delire de toucher*" (24). The logic of the prohibition begins, in other words, as a manner of inhabiting a given space and managing or defending against certain intimacies within that space. "The prohibition," he writes further, "extends not only to direct contact with the body but also to the figurative use of the phrase as 'to come into contact,' or 'be in touch with some one or something'" (24). Thus, what becomes manifest socially as taboo emanates from an earlier interior phobic disposition, only subsequently sanctioned by a larger group of individuals and sustained by that group over time.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, Freud traces this revulsion of contact to a prior instance of thwarted masturbation. "[P]sychoanalysis," he explains,

has made us familiar with the clinical history as well as the psychic mechanism of compulsion neurosis. Thus the history of a typical case of touching phobia reads as follows: In the very beginning, during the early

period of childhood, the person manifested a strong pleasure in touching himself, the object of which was much more specialized than one would be inclined to expect. Presently the carrying out of this very pleasurable act of touching was opposed by a prohibition from without. The prohibition was accepted because it was supported by strong inner forces; it proved to be stronger than the impulse which wanted to manifest itself through this act of touching. But due to the primitive psychic constitution of the child this prohibition did not succeed in abolishing the impulse. Its success lay in repressing the impulse (the pleasure of touching) and banishing it into the unconscious. Both the prohibition and the impulse remained; the impulse because it had only been repressed and not abolished, the prohibition, because if it had ceased the impulse would have broken through into consciousness and would have been carried out. (25-6)

The conclusions here preserve many of the ideas we find in Freud's best known writing on phobia, the 1909 case of "Little Hans," titled "*Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy*." In this study, Freud determines a connection between Hans' phobia of horses and his obsession as a young child with his penis—an obsession with which he is beginning to associate discipline, shame, and competition with his father. What becomes interesting about the new permutations of this idea we find in *Totem and Taboo* is the way in which the psychological significance of phobia, understood to conceal a complex and irrational interior mechanism, becomes the term Freud settles upon for the purpose of reading the unconscious across anthropological accounts of taboo. In other words,

phobia, which Freud later goes on to associate with the feeling of “emotional ambivalence,” functions smoothly in this later text as a kind of missing link, deemed worthy of connecting a “savage” epistemology with the more familiar source material of his corpus, the ubiquitous mental breakdown of the bourgeois subject.

These questions become pertinent to *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, in part, because one of the questions Hurston’s text invites is whether the portrait of Janie she depicts is better understood as psychological—which is to say, written to solicit identification between protagonist and reader—or anthropological, in a kind of contrary insistence on cultural alterity. It is also possible, of course, that Hurston wants to make use of both frameworks. Yet there is still another material link connecting this reading of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* to the questions Freud raises. By way of a 1920 essay titled “The Methods of Ethnology,” we know what Hurston’s Columbia University professor and mentor Franz Boas thought of Freud’s interdisciplinary transgressions, a perspective that would have likely been made known to Hurston in some form. In short, Boas was not especially impressed. Published in the *American Anthropologist*, the essay concludes its interest in contemporary anthropological methodologies with a less than favorable review of Freud’s. While admitting that “some of the ideas underlying Freud’s psychoanalytic studies may be fruitfully applied to ethnological problems,” he decides that the point of *Totem and Taboo* in this regard is rather “one-sided” and therefore deficient to bringing any useful synthesis of the two disciplines to light. What is perhaps most interesting about Boas’ assessment of Freud’s text, considering the present study, is that, ultimately, he finds Freud’s primary interest in “repressed desires” to be especially ill-suited to the extent of the contexts they allegedly inform. He explains, “If, however,



we try to apply the whole theory of the influence of suppressed desires to the activities of man living under different social forms, I think we extend beyond their legitimate limits the inferences that may be drawn from the observation of normal and abnormal individual psychology” (320). Even more crucial to the critique that unfolds is Boas’ concern that the symbolic structures, on which *Totem and Taboo* rests, do not permit indigenous and other non-European epistemologies to participate in explicating social phenomena. At the same time, how this element in psychoanalysis might be fixed is gestured to only lightly. Boas writes,

The results of symbolic interpretation depend primarily upon the subjective attitude of the investigator who arranges phenomena according to his leading concept. In order to prove the applicability of the symbolism of psychoanalysis, it would be necessary to show that a symbolic interpretation from other entirely different points of view would not be equally plausible, and that explanations that leave out symbolic significance or reduce it to a minimum, would not be adequate. (321)

On the one hand, Boas here seems to gesture to the possibility of non-white symbolisms informing and helping to integrate psychoanalytic and anthropological perspectives. Yet, on the other hand, one could easily intuit from the passage that Boas’ irritability stems more from Freud’s more basic decision to infuse scientific writing with symbolism as a mode of interpretation. Here, we find an impasse akin to the one Twain invokes in *Three Thousand Years*: the problem of making room for allegory in the evolving terrain of twentieth-century sciences, which take life, consciousness, and social structures as their primary domains. More to the point of psychoanalysis, Freud’s dangerous provocation is

the idea that there might yet be new opportunities for developing scientific methods in which the interpretation of symbols (in dreams, quotidian experience, language, and affective introspection) is reciprocated with new and ever-unfolding symbolisms.

Turning to Hurston's narrative, we find that answering these methodological quandaries may help us answer another matter in Hurston's text that scholars have long debated: how the author perceived herself in relation to her subject matter. In terms of the trial, Janie is ultimately declared innocent. Thus, even as other African American witnesses doubt the ethical foundation of the white jurors—one reminds that things would be different if she had killed a white man—the event comes to stand in as the ultimate culmination of Janie's mythical transcendence of an otherwise immense social adversity. That is, Janie's exceptionality as a protagonist resides in her role as an ultimate taboo breaker—to the point of being immune, it would seem, to the law. Yet if nearly everything Janie touches seems to turn in her favor—even if, that is, her strongest character trait is a kind of inversion of a *délire de toucher*, invoked in her blithe unresponsiveness to both cultural and legal taboos—it nevertheless remains unclear what Hurston hopes to intend by staring through what she famously termed the “spy-glass of anthropology.” Ultimately, the hydrophobia theme persists as the narrative's deepest structural dramatization of this greater question between outside and inside—between an educated elite in Harlem and an institutionally untethered heroine living in poverty in the Everglades, between the vantage point of a Columbia-trained intellectual and an epistemology of “the muck.” The hydrophobia theme metaphorizes this relationship precisely because its failed navigation by Janie and Tea Cake originates in their lack of access to privileged forms of knowledge production and medical treatment. Thus, the

novel shows us a material discrepancy between the real thing living under the surface and its production as symbolic experience (as well as a context in which these knowledges are reconciled, but only once it is too late). Of course, the other thing Tea Cake's bite leaves behind, which remains an unresolved ambiguity up through the novel's conclusion, is that Janie may yet have the transmitted virus lurking within her. In this sense, Tea Cake's bite retroactively infects *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in its entirety, which, after all, takes shape autobiographically as Janie's self-portrait, delivered orally to her friend Pheoby Watson, post-bite.

Microbiology and anthropology are not interchangeable sciences here, of course. However, their optics promise potentially to create comparable hermeneutics. Thus, the question might be posed: Is Janie's lurking hydrophobia the analogue for the thing Hurston intends to tease out, the real stuff of life, which the symbolic order of "the muck" keeps mired in abstraction? What is most interesting about Hurston's use of hydrophobia as a metaphor for this greater question is the way it builds on comparable debates over metaphor, medical knowledge, and politics that had animated so much of the antislavery print culture explored earlier in this dissertation. Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, Samuel Cornish, Charles Lennox Remond, and Harriet Beecher Stowe had all grappled with a comparable dilemma, contesting the relationship between hydrophobia as metaphor and the idea of a *real thing*, from which structural oppression and a comorbid ignorance was perpetually unfolding. It is possible that Hurston might have had this very genealogy in mind. W.E.B. Du Bois' magazine *The Crisis* (founded in 1910) continued to use the term Negrophobia intermittently. Moreover, while phobia no longer depended extensively for its signifying capacity on an analogy with hydrophobia, and while the

relationship between the two iterations of pathology was certainly dissolving, their metaphorical connection nevertheless continued to resurface occasionally. Thus an article in 1923 lambasts an epidemic of “xenophobia,” by dreaming of “a political Pasteur” who might emerge to “tell the world how to isolate and destroy the germ which shows itself in the indiscriminate hatred of other nationals or other races” (51). It is worth noting further that scholars including Rachel Blau DuPlessis have suggested as much—that Hurston wields the theme of rabidity for precisely this purpose, to provide an affective analogue to structural racism and white supremacy.

However, I would argue that while this may be part of Hurston’s intent, there is still more going on. Ultimately, Hurston uses the hydrophobia plotline to disrupt a hierarchy of representation, evidenced in Boas’ critique of Freud’s symbolism, which would privilege a sterile, reductive realism, increasingly characteristic of Euro-American epistemologies at the turn of the century, above the dynamic symbolisms maintained in Southern African American knowledge production and oral circulation. Throughout the novel, this theme comes through in Hurston’s repeated description of “thought pictures” as crucial to the epistemology of Janie’s various communities. In one early passage, the novel describes how in Janie’s infancy her “Old Nanny” would rock her back and forth, while reminiscing: “Mind-pictures brought feelings, and feelings dragged out dramas from the hollows of her heart” (20). In a later scene, Hurston explains, “When the people sat around on the porch and passed around the pictures of their thoughts for the others to look at and see, it was nice. The fact that the thought pictures were always crayon enlargements of life made it even nicer to listen to” (60). On the one hand, these moments call attention to themselves as deeply anthropological. They give us a sense of Hurston’s

methodology in recreating cultural alterity for her readers, as well as how Hurston views her subjects' communications as premised on visualization (as opposed to linguistic precision, one is left to intuition), as well as embellishment, for the sake of meeting social expectations as to what a good story sounds like. Yet, as the novel concludes, it is this epistemology that Hurston privileges above all others in the text. Upon concluding her monologue to Pheoby, Janie thinks back on Tea Cake. "Of course he wasn't dead," the last paragraph explains. "He could never be dead until she herself had finished feeling and thinking. The kiss of his memory made pictures of love and light against the wall. Here was peace. She pulled in her horizon like a great fish-net. Pulled it from around the waist of the world and draped it over her shoulder. So much of life in its meshes! She called in her soul to come and see" (227). While, on the one hand, the novel continues to privilege the visual above other sensorial modes, to focus too much on this aspect would be to miss the point. What seems most remarkable in the thought pictures Hurston uses to conclude her novel is that here she insists finally on valuing metaphorical epistemologies above those largely beyond Janie's realm of influence, even as she might be harboring a rabies virus preparing to do its deadly work. In this final move, Hurston asks us to keep hydrophobia alive as a metaphor in her novel, capable of signifying something more than the base literality of its microscopic agency. Of course, a number of scholars and cultural critics, including Susan Sontag, Timothy Mitchell, Sharon Snyder, and others, have warned against this move of making disease or disability into abstract signifiers. While these interventions urge useful caution, however, they potentially eclipse the disciplinary histories by which metaphor and allegory have in many ways been eradicated—perhaps inoculated is the word—from the public sphere. The history this dissertation traces—the

use of phobia as a political metaphor, aesthetic sensation, and repurposed affect to reconceptualize the relationship between fear, race, and sexuality in U.S. print media—shows us a genealogy where the perpetual reactivation of metaphor served as a strategy for keeping progressive representation dynamic. Only by feeling backward through this genealogy, from the perspective of a contemporary rhetorical fashion at once ubiquitous and largely emptied of this earlier dynamism, are we able to reckon with the lack we have inherited. It is a lack we know well, but here its urgency surfaces in a sobering clarity of deprivation: the relegation of figurative epistemologies, or as Benjamin would have it storytelling itself, to outmoded obscurities. This seems to be the work Hurston's novel persists in reanimating.

## CONCLUSION

This dissertation has not only been about the uses of metaphor in U.S. progressivism. It is also about a history by which phobia has been sequestered as a negative affect, in many traditions *the* negative affect, and the resistance of certain writers to this unilateral move, among them Douglass, Stowe, and Aubrey Beardsley. Hurston too shows a certain affinity with this resistance. At one moment, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* explains to readers: “Through indiscriminate suffering men know fear and fear is the most divine emotion. It is the stones for altars and the beginning of wisdom. Half gods are worshipped in wine and flowers. Real gods require blood” (144-5). Along these lines, this dissertation has tried to trace a genealogy of phobia’s political recuperability. However, in concluding, I want to speculate on how this recuperability might be reconceptualized in an era when the link between phobia and rabidity is no longer as operative. In acknowledging this loss, we should consider briefly what it would mean to extend a resistance to an avowed eradication of fear as a political emotion, according to the valences the phobia metaphor has taken since these earlier uses.

In suggesting something along these lines as a concluding gesture, we might look to another foray in a phobic imagination to emerge in the 1930s, a series of art deco illustrations by John Vassos revolving around phobia’s myriad possible attachments. In 1931, Vassos published the illustrations in the form of a limited-edition book, titled simply *Phobia*. Made up of 24 plates, the book presented a kind of modernist taxonomy, each plate corresponding to a particular phobia. These include depictions of mechanophobia, the fear of machinery, represented as a landscape of brutal cogs

squashing humans in their teeth; batophobia, or the fear of falling objects, represented as a kind of urban vortex being assaulted by flaming asteroids shooting from the sky; as well as phagophobia, meaning a fear of swallowing, which shows an individual, sitting alone at a restaurant, who conjures a spectral image of himself choking to death, rising from the back of his neck, as though a forecast of his departed soul sweeping upward.<sup>79</sup> But perhaps one image captures the thematic nature of the series more than all others—one called “monophobia,” meaning a fear of being alone, which pictures a composite juxtaposition of three scenes, one of a woman in bed looking up at a dark, alienating cosmos; one individual taking a gun from a drawer, apparently to take his life; and another standing alone on a barren planet with his hands to his ears. Most evocative about the appearance of this phobia in the greater series is the way an experience of isolation—which registers at once a dread of isolation, but also the stigmatization of being by oneself—serves as a repeated theme throughout the collection. That is, while monophobia might describe the particular phobia of solitude, the theme of being caught in isolation—of being beyond empathy, the reach of others—runs through all of the collected images. Thus, mechanophobia contrasts one’s helplessness with the concerted intimacy of predatory gears; batophobia disperses its victims of aerial assault into opposite directions; and phagophobia depicts a scene of dining by oneself, another familiar fear, in which Vassos’ dread of swallowing seems implicated. In short, monophobia becomes the driving idea of phobia itself: the stigma of the pathology residing in a logic that positions phobia as the antithesis of intimacy, human sociality, and with it the experience of *attachment* writ large, as an antithetical phenomenology. This

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<sup>79</sup> Each plate may be found at the following link: <http://socks-studio.com/2013/11/20/depicting-human-phobia-the-illustrations-of-john-vassos/>



latter point seems to be where the most evocative paradox of *Phobia* resides. The phobias collected describe states of isolating cathexis—that is, they are legible only by virtue of their fixations—yet these fixations comprise the structure of their ever-deepening isolation.

Where hydrophobia dissolved as an analogy through which other phobias thrived, this monophobia seems to have ascended. In acknowledging this constitutive logic, we should be careful not to diminish the genuinely isolating experience of phobia. However, we should be willing to recognize equally where a stigmatization of solitude has contributed further to the diminishment of phobia as a usable feeling, and thus also an intensification of the solitude that has been taken as a sign of that pathology. This seems to be the primary provocation of contemporary progressive iterations of the phobia metaphor, as well: to be labeled as homophobic, transphobia, Islamophobia, or xenophobic, is to be interpreted as operating from an experience of pathological isolation, a deficiency in sociality, or some other failure to engage a public intimacy. Indeed, even the rhetoric of internalized homophobia reads phobia as a failure to engage an alternative structure of longing; thus, the solution to that shame manifests as a re-suturing of one's social affect to an interior truth of desire, toward which one's self is always inwardly leaning. On the one hand, this logical formulation is dangerous because it turns the experience of solitude into pathology, associating certain forms of sociality with normative manifestations of desire and affinity, while making no room for deviant iterations of queer belonging. Moreover, as suggested above, this rhetoric makes the crude move of categorically pathologizing certain affective dispositions, while sanctifying others as universally good. In addition to all of this, the contemporary rhetoric

of phobia has convinced us that the structural oppression of minorities formed around sexuality, gender identification, race, and religion is not *also intimate*. In this rhetorical neglect of the intimacy of violence, we discover an important continuity with the abolitionist writings considered in this dissertation. As the author of “Negro-Phobia Vs. Negro-Equality-Phobia” reminds us, the origins of political disenfranchisement do not emerge solely in contexts of distance, anonymity, and fear. On the contrary, these structures depend for their foundation upon proximity, legibility, and forms of intimate belonging.

Another plate in Vassos’ *Phobia* series may provide one useful means of rethinking future possibilities of repurposing phobia as a feeling beyond its conditions of historical lack (which is to say, the antislavery genealogy we have forgotten), as well as its limitations as a particular rhetoric of pathologization. This plate depicts the state at the center of this chapter—a case of *mysophobia*, defined in Vassos’ book as a “fear of dirt and contamination.” The depiction shows a woman with a scowl on her face, her hair pulled back in a bun, her legs crossed, and her arms folded. Twelve hands creep out of the left-hand corner of the image, reaching up at her with uncertain intentions. The dread she conceals facially appears depicted behind her: a spirit rushes from the scene toward the sky. Yet she remains seated. Here we find a couple of interesting ideas in play. On the one hand, the hands that reach up to touch the subject appear to be creatures of her imagination, in which her dread of touching an exterior world has become inverted into a dread of other people’s hands rushing up toward her. But through this inversion, we discover also a more genuine picture of phobia’s sociality than monophobia can give us: an insistence on phobia’s intrinsic participation in the making of the public sphere. This

seems to be more or less the insistence of the subject herself who does not budge as the hands threaten to contaminate her. In the state of confrontation she maintains, what has gone by the name of mysophobia seems to double as a scene of potential sexual assault. Far from being driven into the isolation characteristic of other plates in the collection, the irritated woman holds her ground. Indeed, the plate shares an uncanny resemblance to a popular gif of recent years, showing an angry woman on the log flume at Splash Mountain, Disney World, who looks directly into the ride's camera, her visage stone-cold, her arms folded, while a single word at last flashes onto the screen, reading: "NOPE."<sup>80</sup> Like this discontented heroine, riding the log flume of history, surrounded by a deeply suspect imperative to raise one's arms and smile at all events in unison, Vassos' mysophobe remains a perfect picture of disinclination. Hers is a politics of queer refusal, which shapes in its disposition toward the violent intimacy of hands encroaching toward her a new relational mode, a repurposing of phobic feeling, with which the hands will be forced to reckon.

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<sup>80</sup> "Angry Splash Mountain Lady."  
<http://i0.kymcdn.com/photos/images/original/001/091/278/a51.gif>

APPENDIX I: ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

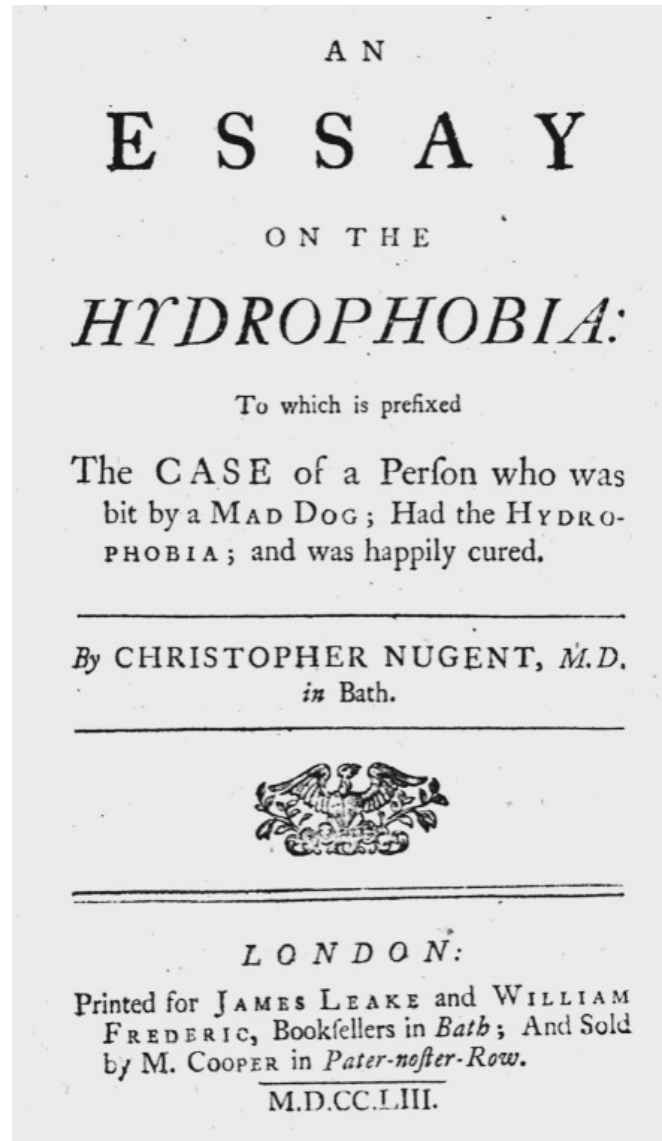


Figure 1      Nugent, Christopher. *An Essay on the Hydrophobia: To Which Is Prefixed the Case of a Person Who Was Bit by a Mad Dog.* London: James Leake & William Frederic, 1753.



Figure 2      "Kunophobia--The Church in Danger." *The Humorist: A Companion for the Christmas Fireside*. London: Ackerman, 1831.



**A CASE OF HYDROPHOBIA.**

Figure 3      "Terrible Case of Hydrophobia." *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. Sept. 1868.



**A RABID WOMAN.**

Figure 4      "A Rabid Woman." *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. August 1868.



Annette saved from the mad dog by poor Bessie.

Figure 5 "Poor Bessy." *The Infants' Annual, Or, A Mother's Offering*. Peabody & Co., 1832.



## CHAPTER 1

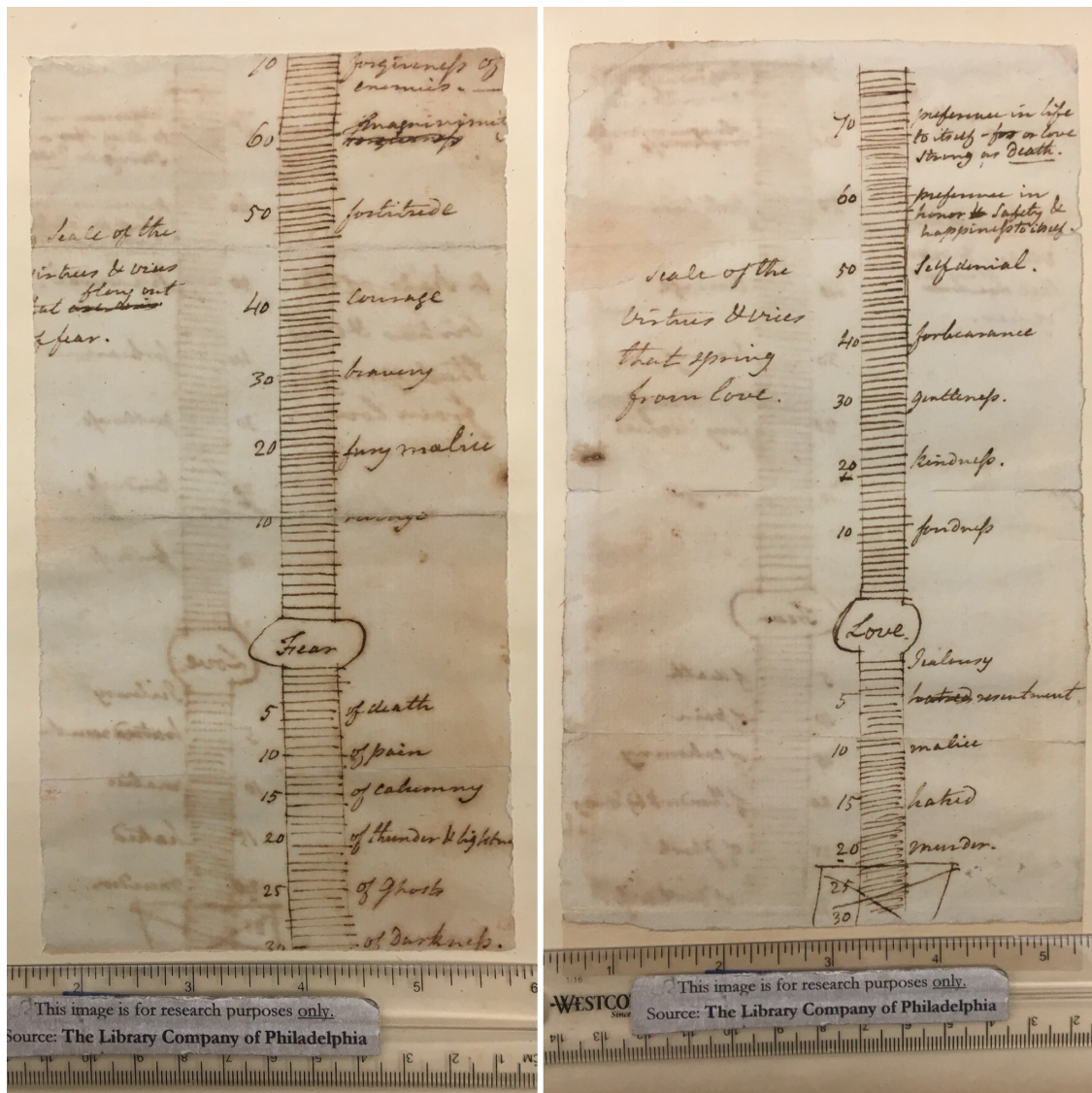


Figure 6 Affect Scales. Benjamin Rush Correspondence. Rush Family Papers (Library Company of Philadelphia Collections)



Figure 7 "Church Reformophobia." *Figaro in London*. Jan. 11, 1834. (Illustration by Robert Seymour.) Satirizes the Tithe War conflict, 1831-1836.



Figure 8      "Illustration of "J.D." (Jefferson Davis) as a Mad Dog, on a New York envelope, circa 1861-1865. (American Antiquarian Society Collections)



## CHAPTER 3

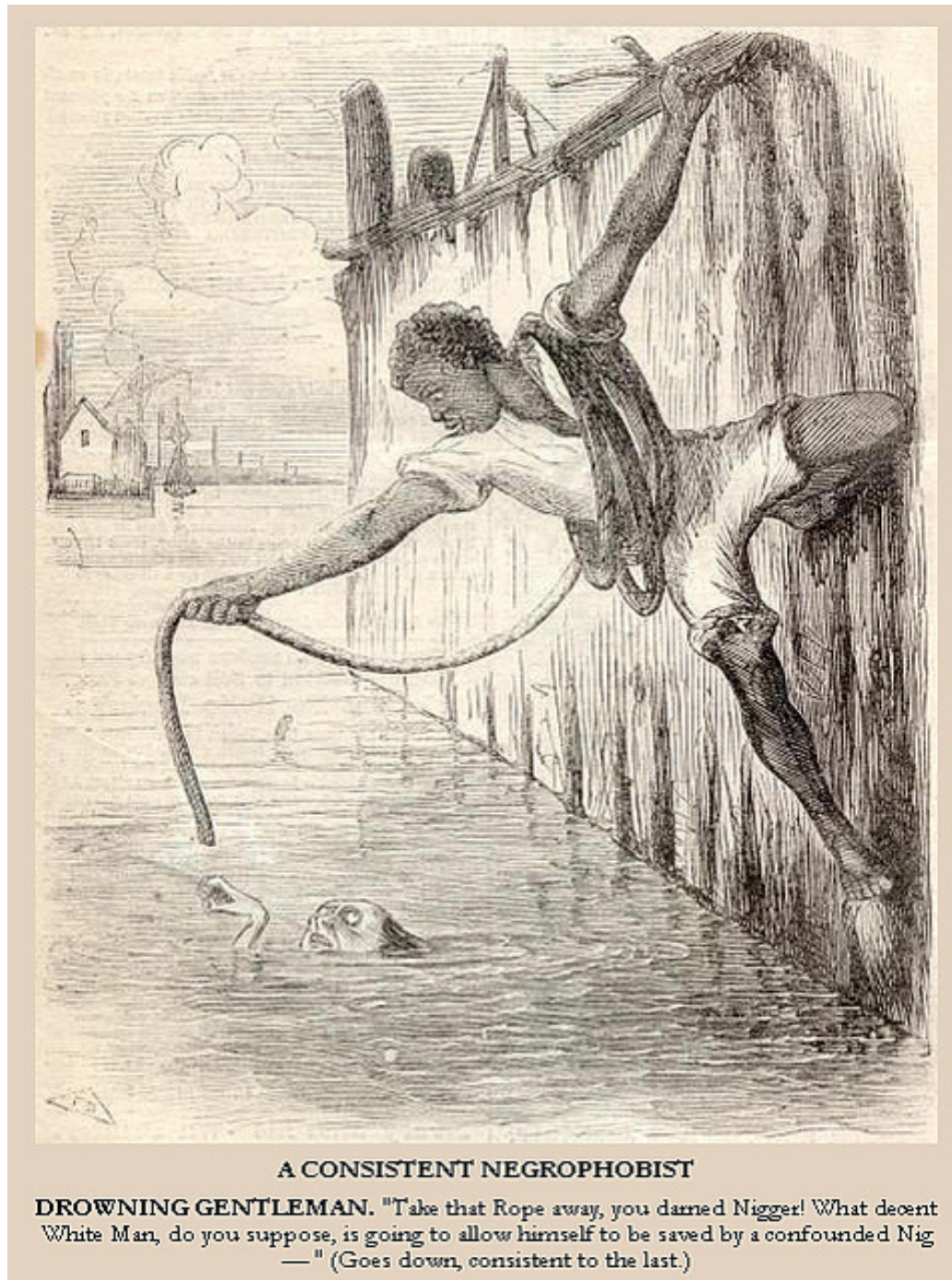


Figure 9

Bellew, Frank. "A Consistent Negrophobist."  
*Harper's Weekly*, 6 August 1862, p. 528.



Figure 10      *Watson and the Shark* (1778), John Singleton Copley





For the Liberator.

**COLORPHOBIA.**

BY HEZEKIAH HUMANKIND.

I.

The *Colorphobia*—what is that?  
Does it infect the dog or cat?  
Does the disease prove fatal ever?  
Or is it but a skin deep fever?

II.

The turkey-cock, I've heard it said,  
A deep aversion has to red;  
O, stupid bird! O, silly biped!  
OUR COUNTRY'S FLAG *with red is striped!*

III.

This Colorphobia—as they name it—  
So mean that very few will claim it—  
While it remains above the sod,  
Should never curse the 'church of God'!

IV.

'Tis not the color gives offence;  
They only say so for pretence;  
Care they a fig how black the face?  
No—if the 'nigger' 'keep his place.'

V.

Would ye be just? mind not complexion;  
Black though the skin, 'tis no objection;  
Mind not the color, all else right;  
*A man's a MAN, or black or white.*

VI.

This is the thought that stirs their gall,—  
That colored men are MEN *at all*;  
And fix the thing the best you can,  
'Tis not the *color*, but the MAN.

Figure 11 Humankind, Hezekiah. "Colorphobia."  
*The Liberator*, 22 Jun. 1849, p. 100.

## CHAPTER 4

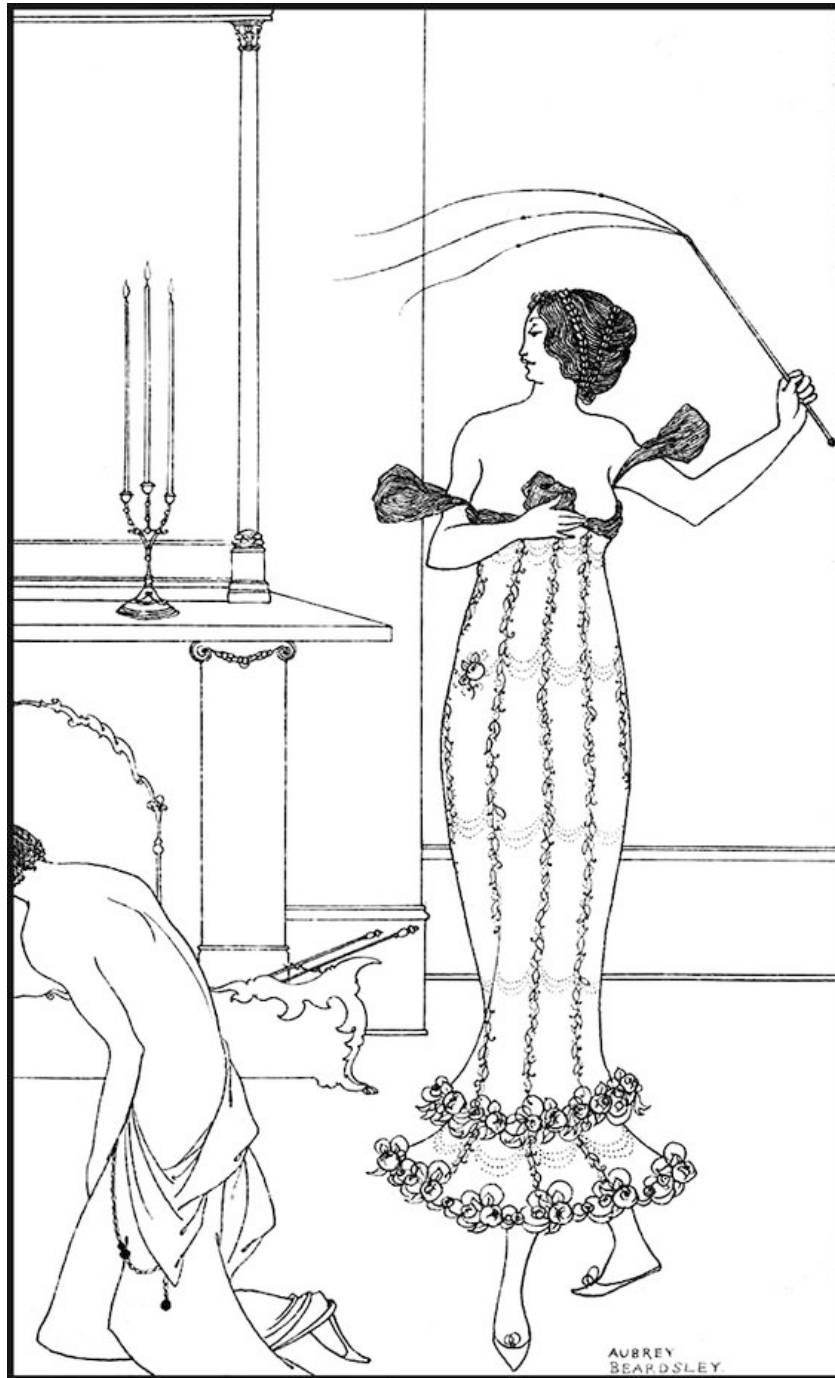


Figure 12 Beardsley, Aubrey. "Frontispiece." *A Full and True Account of the Wonderful Mission of Earl Lavender*. Ward & Downey, Limited, 1895.

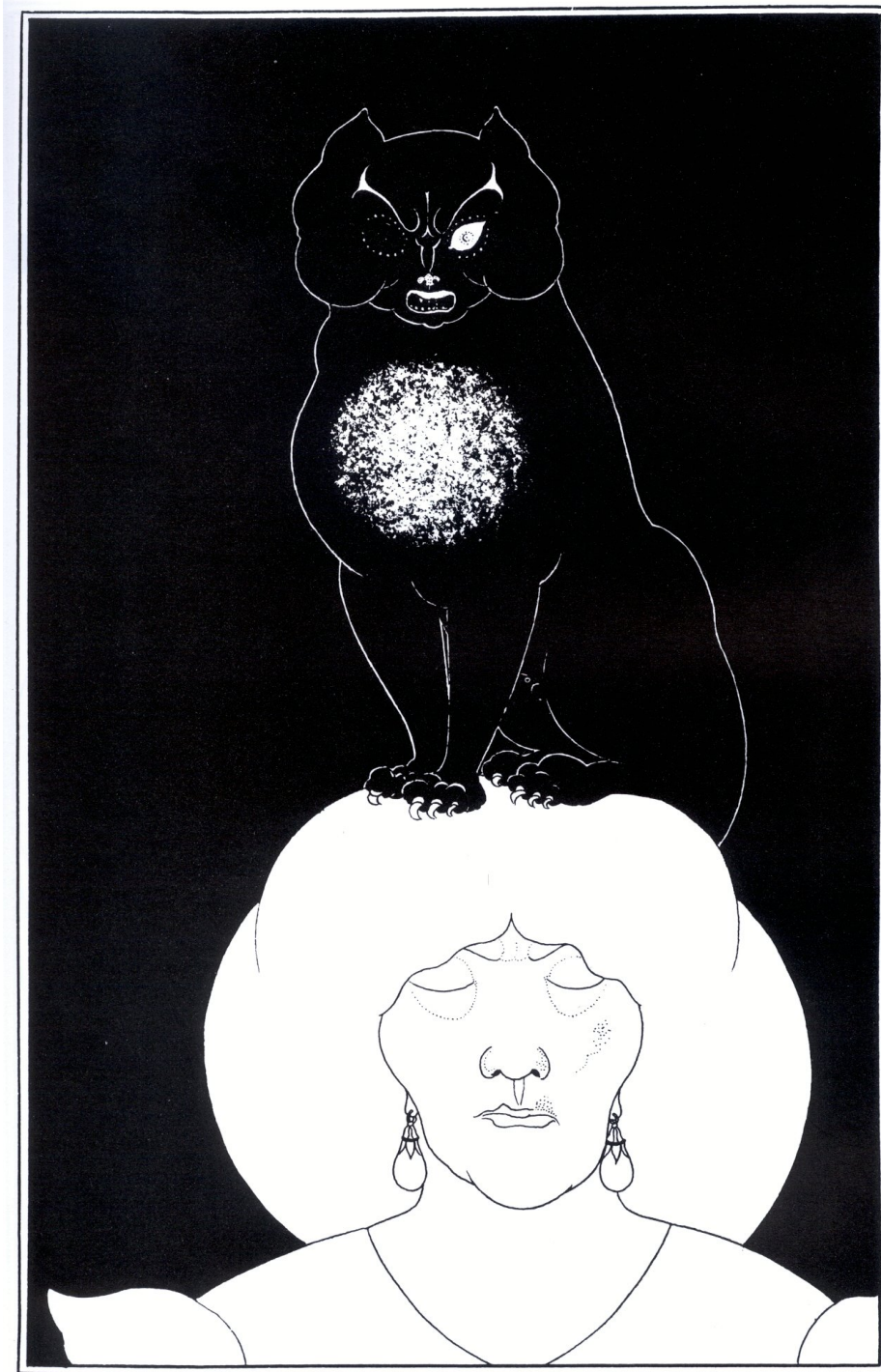


Figure 13      Beardsley, Aubrey. Illustration of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Black Cat," *The Chapbook Semi-Monthly*. Herbert S. Stone and Co., Chicago, 1894.





Figure 14 Beardsley, Aubrey. "Unexpurgated *Enter Herodias.*"  
*Salomé.* 1894.



Figure 15 Beardsley, Aubrey. "Revised *Enter Herodias*." *Salomé*. 1894.





Figure 16      Beardsley, Aubrey. "Unexpurgated *The Toilette of Salomé.*" *Salomé.* 1894.



Figure 17      Beardsley, Aubrey. "The Dancer's Reward."  
Salomé. 1894.



Figure 18 Beardsley, Aubrey. "J'ai baisé ta bouche." *Salomé*. 1894.



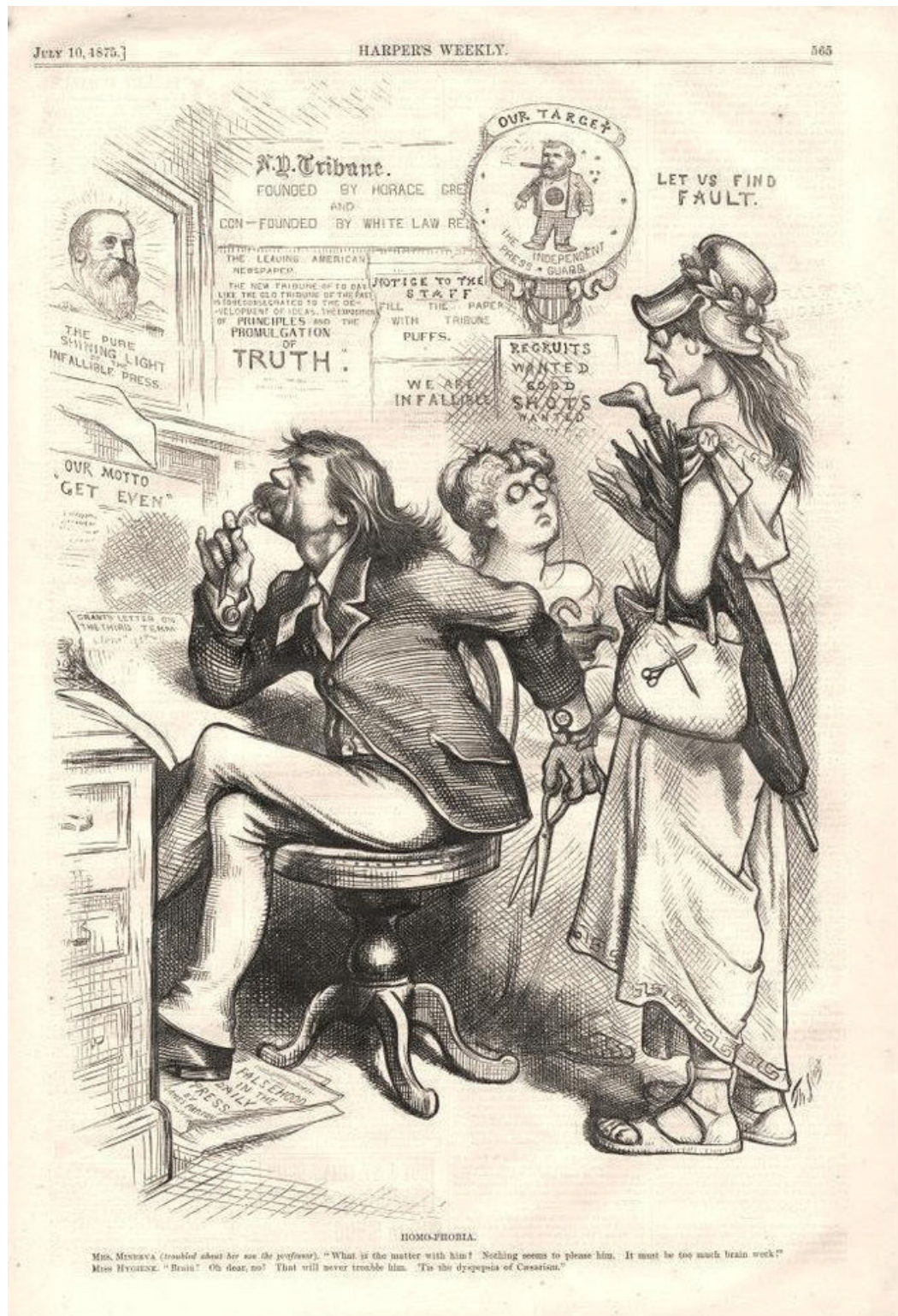


Figure 19 "Homo-Phobia." *Harper's Weekly* (June 10, 1875): 565.

## CHAPTER 5



Figure 20      “An Inoculation for Hydrophobia.” *Harper’s Weekly* vol. 29, no. 1513, 19 Dec. 1885, p. 836.



Figure 21      "Applying the Madstone to Arm of a Girl Who Was Bitten by a Rabid Dog." *Terre Haute Daily Union*. May 14, 1858.



*one in family lies of other people*

Mrs. Silas Worcester Hyde

December, 1902.

Tuesday Ellsworth Bath, Maine

antipathy to cats? *Decidedly.*

Do you subject to unusual feelings or symptoms in the presence of a cat? *Yes.*

3----What are these? *Fear, repulsion, sometimes faintness or nausea.*

4----Does the presence of a tiger in a menagerie affect you as do cats? *Yes, but being caged less effective.*

5----Can you account for your cat fear by anything obvious, as for example, any incident of childhood? *No.*

6----At what age did you first discover your peculiarity as to cats? *Do not remember.*

*Other members of my family have similar sensations.*

B. 1----Are you surely aware of the presence of a cat when it is not in sight, or known to be near?

2----If yes, give the evidence, your own and that of others, as to the fact.

3----What feelings or symptoms make you sure of the cat's presence?

4----Is it the cat odour?

5----How long have you had this peculiarity?

Please to answer A. & B. with their numbers.

Kindly mention other cases with addresses.

In dealing with this information I shall use no names.

S. Weir Mitchell, M. D.

Understanding that you are willing to answer my questions I beg to ask for an early reply.

Figure 22 Mitchell, Silas Weir. "Cat Fear Survey." 1902-1903. S. Weir Mitchell Personal Papers. College of Physicians of Philadelphia. MSS 2/0241-03, Ser. 1 Oversized Folder.

Dr. Gertrude Ward,  
41 Park Place,  
Bloomfield, N. J. May 30-1903-

Answers to Questions on "Cat fear"

A. 1. Yes -  
2. Yes -  
3. (a) Subjective.  
(1) Intense fear of being tricked  
by the animal.  
(2) Uncontrollable feeling that  
I must weep - if animal  
is moving -  
(3) Violent palpitations of heart.  
(4) Hot flashes -  
(5) Dyspnoea -  
(6) Nausea - not constant.  
(b) Objective.  
(1) Involuntary start - ac-

Figure 23 "Letter from Gertrude Ward to Silas Weir Mitchell." S. Weir Mitchell Personal Papers. College of Physicians of Philadelphia. MSS 2/0241-03, Ser. 1 Oversized Folder.



THE BOSTON  
Medical and Surgical Journal,  
3 School Street.

Editorial Dept., Room D, up stairs.

*Print-Annals*  
Boston, Dec. 29, 1902.

S. Weir Mitchell, M. D., LL. D.,  
Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Dr. Mitchell:-

In reply to your note of about Dec. 9th in regard to cases of cat fear, I beg to mention the case of a lady, formerly a patient of mine at various times but who is now dead, who had this peculiarity developed to a high degree. She realized the presence of a cat in a room with great certainty, becoming pale, agitated and faint, and this even when the cat had not been seen and its presence was unsuspected by other people present. In order to verify my recollections I lately spoke with her sister who confirmed the correctness of these statements very positively.

Very truly yours,

George B. Shattuck,

Editor.

*per S.*

Figure 24 "Letter from George B. Shattuck to Silas Weir Mitchell."  
S. Weir Mitchell Personal Papers. College of Physicians of  
Philadelphia. MSS 2/0241-03, Ser. 1 Oversized Folder.

## APPENDIX II:

### “THE HAUNTED MAN” (1832), BY JOHN NEAL<sup>81</sup>

*[NOTE: One of the defining ambitions of this project has been to uncover a corpus, a collection of archives related by a phobic aesthetic, which scholars have neglected to acknowledge previously. To represent this element of the project, I include a transcription of one such story, which remains obscure and relatively difficult to access in libraries or online, “The Haunted Man,” by John Neal, published in The Atlantic Souvenir in 1832. In addition to being a good example of the phobic imagination this dissertation attempts to uncover in antebellum literature, the story is interesting for its allusion throughout to several famous case studies of hydrophobia in contemporary transatlantic medical print culture.]*

SOME time in the fall of 1824, I happened to be in the southern part of England, where grapes grow in the open air, and every cottage roof is literally heaped with flowers at certain seasons of the year—now with white roses and now with the tri-coloured morning-glory, while the door-ways and windows are overhung with transparent vine leaves, through which the small panes, of three inches by four at the most, glitter and sparkle in the sunshine, like a swarm of happy insects after a shower, when the green leaves are all alive with their motion. I spent the greater part of a whole week in rambling about the neighbourhood and sketching whatever I saw that pleased me. One beautiful day—it was the Sabbath, not the Jewish, but the Christian Sabbath—happening to be in a

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<sup>81</sup> When I first discovered this story, I became somewhat dismayed in observing that, while John Neal was the only famous writer by this name in the United States known to have published work in *The Atlantic Souvenir*, the name above “The Haunted Man” in the 1832 edition had been spelled with a superfluous “e” as “Neale.” With the help of Amy Sopcak Joseph, I have at last put this mystery to rest. In perusing the cost book of Carey and Hart, for printing the 1832 edition of the *Atlantic Souvenir* (held at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania), we see that Neal’s name is spelled accurately, in the typewritten transcription. However, we also learn from the cost book that *The Atlantic Souvenir* was employing an engraver by the name of John *Neagle* during these same years. As these are the only two names that approximate the misspelling in the 1832 edition, we may conclude that the story rightly belongs to the writer, John Neal.

church yard set thick with the armorial paneling of a multitude, who, if one might judge by the care taken of their titles and virtues here, had no very exalted notion of immortality elsewhere, and among whom were not a few of England's haughtiest nobility, over whose magnificent records the children of the village were in the habit of playing marbles on holiday afternoons; and happening to forget myself so far as to pull out my sketch-book and pencil, without any regard to the day, for the purpose of trying a three-cornered view of the beautiful church, with its unpretending battlements, ponderous door-way, and grotesque embrasures, my attention was suddenly called off by the triumphant peal of an organ, the finest I ever heard in my life. Seized with a new feeling, and half ashamed of my employment, which smacked prodigiously of the cockney tourist, I shuffled my book into its place, and made my way directly to the church door, the organ pealing afar off, like a thunder-burst over still water,

‘Sound the loud timbrels o’er Egypt’s dark sea!

Jehovah has triumph’d, his people are free!’

I never shall forget the volume and sweetness—the heavy soar and intermingling chime of that organ. It was the chant of a liberated people—the overpowering anthem of a great multitude, men, women and children, suddenly lifting up their voices in the desert, on the pouring forth of pure water from the smitten rock. How I entered the church, and how I found the seat occupied, I knew not; what I say is the solemn truth, however strange it may appear; but the organ stopped, and, in looking up, I found all the eyes of the congregation fixed upon me, even those of the clergyman and the clerk, who were

directly facing me. What had I done; how came I where I was—in a pew carpeted with gorgeous cloth and carved with, what I had entirely overlooked before, a coronet? I felt sorry and perplexed, and might have been afraid to lift my eyes, but for my perfect innocence of all presumption. To my infinite relief the service began at last, and gave me an opportunity to get my breath and look about me. It was communion day. The vessels of gold and the vessels of silver were spread out before me, most of them with a counterpart of the very arms I had just perceived on the back of the pew emblazoned upon them, coronet and all. Of course they were the gift of *our* family, the occupants of the pew; the first fruits, it might be, of a princely heritage. I could have cried with vexation had I been a few years younger; but now I felt rather more inclined for a laugh, particularly when I called to mind my sketching attitude for the Sabbath-day, and the possibility that I had been observed by the congregation before I found my way into church. Zounds! I can see myself now. What must they have taken me for? Peradventure a job poet, or an amateur tragedian going through a rehearsal in a grave-yard, for a first appearance at the Adelphi or Bartholomew-fair. Meantime the service went on with all its grave simplicity and awakening changes; the organ rolled out once more, and then died away in a rich voluntary; and I was beginning to forget the strangeness of my situation, when a door opened softly behind me, a curtain was lifted, and a very dignified-looking man entered, the sight of whose cold, pale, intellectual countenance brought me instantly to my recollection. He bowed, and seeing me about to rise, made a sign to me to be seated, knelt down upon a low cushion before us, covered his face with his hands, and took no further notice of any thing till the incident occurred which I am about to mention. While he sat with his head turned towards the preacher, I had an opportunity of studying

it and him, and, what was yet more delightful to me just then, of ascertaining how on earth I had got into the pew. The fact was, and I remembered it all now—the only wonder being how I should not have remembered it before; the fact was, that instead of making my way to the principal door of the church, I had gone up to a sort of private entrance in the rear, about which five or six persons were gathered, and waiting, as we do in this country, for a chance to creep in without disturbing the rest of the congregation, so I thought. As I drew nigh they all made way for me, and this very man opened the door with a low bow as if I had been waited for; and the next moment I found myself within the church, and every pew near me crowded except one, which I lost no time in taking possession of. He did not follow at the time nor did the others; and being dull of the music, I did not observe that, on passing the door, a fold of rich blue cloth fell into its place and concealed it, so that when I saw the people staring at me I looked up to find the door by which I had entered, and not being able to find it, I had nothing to do, of course, but stare at them in reply. And now, having satisfied myself upon a subject about which I confess I had begun to feel rather sensitive and sore, I fell to studying the character of the face before me. It was a very singular face, an extraordinary face; hardly a feature where it should be, or what it should be; and yet, take it altogether, one of the most intellectual, handsome and attractive faces I ever saw. The eyes were large and serene, the forehead high, and the mouth expressive enough; but there was a something, a haughty, cold, repulsive something, which came and went like a shadow from within, over the transparent breadth of his temples, and altered the bland expression of the mouth and eyes continually; more than once too, while I was looking at him, I saw his chin quiver; it was the largest and best chin I ever saw in my life, it reminded me of Napoleon's, of Lord

Byron's, and of the old fashioned sculpture, though it was rather out of proportion with his other features, and might have belonged to a seven feet Apollo Belvidere. But his teeth were like those of a she-wolf, and he had the nose of a bald-eagle. I am thus particular, merely to prove that I had my senses about me at the time; and that I have them now, although I should repeat the declaration, that, take him altogether, he was the handsomest man I ever saw. Perhaps I should have been able to finish the portrait, feature by feature, shadow by shadow—I am sure I could with my portfolio before me; but in the very midst of the sitting, the consecrated elements were announced for distribution. The pew doors were flung open, that which I occupied among the rest; and the communicants began to gather about the supper-table. My attention was directed towards the clergyman. I liked his affectionate, earnest and solemn bearing, though it smacked of the national church, and was running over in my own mind the several distinguishing tones and styles that we have, whereby a man's faith may be known with considerable certainty the moment he opens his mouth, when all at once I heard a sort of smothered cry, a loud gasping for breath, and, turning quickly, I had just time to see one of the golden cups flung on the pavement before me; the red wine running over the marble floor; the stranger standing up, face to face, with the frightened preacher; the cup lying at his feet as if crushed and trampled on; the windows and doors suddenly darkened with a mass of human creatures trying to escape; and the communicants clinging to each other and recoiling in breathless terror, from his uplifted arms and terrible countenance. Another cry, and the stranger lay extended his whole length upon the floor. In a moment the church was deserted. Not a living creature stood within the four walls except the preacher, the gray-headed sexton, four servants in a splendid livery who burst through the



door behind me when they heard the cry, a very aged man who kept raving about his poor mater, and myself. I would have stayed, but the clergyman begged me to go, as the unfortunate stranger was in the best hands. I saw that he was dreadfully agitated, and the more so when he understood, by my questions, that I was ignorant of the very name of the sufferer. “Then let me entreat you, sir,” said he, “as a man, as a gentleman, as a Christian, to keep the secret so far as you have it in your power. I know him, and his five domestics know him; but no other human creature does, I believe, in this part of the country.” I could not refuse, how could I? and without even communicating my own name, or making a merit of submission, I left the church. There was a good deal of talk that day at the tavern where I had put up, and the result of all I heard was—heard, I say, for I asked no questions, and rather avoided the subject—that although no two persons could agree upon the name of the stranger, the greatest unanimity prevailed upon two points: first, that he was a madman, probably out on his good behaviour, and well known to their curate, else he would not have been allowed to approach the table; and next, that he was a man of high rank, if not of the highest. Indeed, some went so far as to say it was no other than poor Leopold himself; and one man declared to me in a whisper—pointing, as he spoke, to a portrait of the prince which hung side by side with that of the princess Charlotte, and laying his finger on the nose and I could not help acknowledging the resemblance there—that, between ourselves, he had seen Leopold so often that he could not be mistaken. I stared for I had seen Leopold too, and I thought he could be mistaken; but he added that he had not seen the stranger himself, he had only heard him described; nevertheless, in his own mind he was satisfied, satisfied that the prince of Saxe Coburg and the poor stranger were one and the same person. “Besides,” whispered he, “what

could be more natural—the sudden death of his wife and child.” “So many years ago?” said I. “Precisely,” said he, “and the state of his late majesty’s health, you know.” “Precisely,” said I; “these things always run in families. And here we parted.

Fifteen months after this, to a day, as I was loitering through the grounds at Versailles, a man passed me in a Spanish cloak, who stopped and looked at me for a moment, as if doubtful whether to speak to me or not, and then passed on. I gazed after him, and tried to recollect where I had seen him before; but, after a few moments, finding the image that I had half conjured up as he walked by me growing fainter and fainter, I abandoned the idea, and pursued my way to a part of the grounds where, at a prodigious cost, what is called an English garden had been laid out. There I encountered the stranger again. He stood still, directly fronting me, as I came round a little patch of stunted shrubbery; his cloak had fallen from his shoulders, and I had a fair opportunity of seeing his countenance. I knew him instantly; it was the stranger who, fifteen months before, had flung down the consecrated vessels, dashed to the earth the golden cup in the Lord’s house, and sunk upon the floor as if smitten by a thunder-bolt for the sacrilege. Instead of avoiding me now, as I should him, the moment he caught a view of my person, he walked up to me, lifted his hat, and appeared to be just on the point of making me a very low bow, and then all at once he appeared to be in doubt, his cheerful step faltered, a shade of perplexity came up, as if out of the depth of his heart, over his fine countenance, and he stood for half a minute before he replaced his hat, which he did at last with a mighty aristocratic air as I lifted mine. Pitying his perplexity, and half ashamed of myself on account of the part I had played at our first interview; half afraid of him too, I hardly knew why, for he had every sign of good health about him now; and a little angry

moreover at the fashion of his bow; I would have passed on without caring to know more of my mysterious gentleman, or to interchange any further civilities: but, seeing my purpose, he put himself in my way, lifted his hat, and fixing his keen eyes on mine, while he bent his body courteously enough, he said to me, in a voice that thrilled through and through me, "You are the very man, sir."

Lord help me! Though I, before I answered; here's a pretty kettle of fish: entrapped by a madman where no human creature can help me. At last I got my breath, and was able to say, "I do not understand you, sir."

"The very man! I beg your pardon, who are you, sir?"

My gorge began to rise. "Who the devil are you!" said I, "and by what right am I questioned by you after this fashion?"

"I beg ten thousand pardons," cried my tormentor, "I see you are puzzled, and I cannot wonder at it; I'll tell you why, sir, and you must forgive me. For two whole years you have haunted me, haunted me by night and by day, and yet I never heard your voice in my life, to my knowledge. I know you by sight—I am sure I know you, and yet, for the soul of me, I cannot tell where we have been acquainted, nor am I certain that I have ever seen you before." As he said this he looked so unhappy, so puzzled, and so altogether worthy of compassion, that, entirely forgetting his behavior, the place, and my own apprehensions, I took both of his extended hands into mine, and, without losing a moment, proceeded to detail to him, step by step, as I saw by the changes of his countenance how he bore it, all that I knew, all that I had been told, and all that I conjectured of him. You may wonder at my courage, and had you stood a little way off and heard our conversation, without looking into his eyes or seeing the movement of his

handsome mouth and brilliant teeth, you would have wondered still more. When I spoke of the manner in which I was greeted by all eyes on taking possession of the pew, he smiled. When I dwelt for a moment on my consternation at seeing the carved coronet, his lip withered as if stung with some indignant thought. When I told him how utterly incapable I was of explaining how I got into the pew till I saw him lift up the heavy cloth, he appeared inclined to laugh; but the next moment, when I alluded to his behavior at the communion-table and to the outrage he had committed there, he shuddered from head to foot, and covered his face with his hands, and breathed for a moment or two with terrific energy and then, after I had got through on mentioning to him what people said he was at the tavern, he burst forth into a fit of loud joyous laughter, stopped suddenly short, and the tears came into his eyes.

“And what did you think of me?” said he, after I had finished.

I told him as plainly as language could speak it, for I knew—I was satisfied now that the man before me was no more mad than myself, whatever else he might be.

“Sir,” said he in reply, “I wonder at your courage; we must be better acquainted. I do not ask who you are, I do not even wish you to know who I am, in the outward ceremonials of life. Names are nothing. No matter who I am, or what my rank is; though at the time you saw me first, which I am astonished to find was only a year ago, instead of two years—”

“Fifteen months to a day,” said I; “I have just been through the calculation—”

“Well then, fifteen months to a day, at the time you saw me first, I was a visitor at Arundel, and the occupier of a prince’s pew in church, and, of course (with a bitter sneer), the companion of princes. Go with me; we will take a turn or two over these

absurdly contrived grounds, where the revenues of a nation have been wasted upon a toy-shop and a baby-house, and then, if you have nothing to interfere with it, I shall be happy to offer you a plain dinner at my chambers; I do not say at my hotel, for mine is every body's hotel who can pay for it."

Well, not to delay the best part of the story—the end, after a long walk we dined together; and so we did the next day and the next and the next, until I had begun to feel the strongest admiration of this man's powers, and the greatest curiosity to find him out. He lived a very retired life, saw no company, and was only known as Mr. Smith; and yet he was young—not over thirty-five, wealthy, handsome in spite of his nose, high-bred, and highly accomplished. Never did I see such strength of mind united with such brilliancy of imagination; such sober good sense united with such fervour of enthusiasm.

As last, after an intimacy of a whole month, during which I met him almost every day, having seen him grow suddenly pale—as pale as death, one afternoon as we were passing a fountain, he led me into a café, called for a private room furnished without mirrors, and having, to my surprise, pushed a sofa against the door, asked me if I had ever observed any thing strange in his behaviour since we had been acquainted. I hardly knew what to say, every thing he did was strange; and, after he had repeated the question, I told him so.

But instead of being displeased, he appeared pleased with my plain dealing. "We understand each other now," said he. "I know what your opinion of me is, I feel sure—quite sure; but before I proceed further, 'to make assurance doubly sure,' allow me to ask you if you think me a—a--," tapping his forehead with his fore finger, "a—a--."

There was something so cheerful in his eye when he did this, so comical about his mouth and so unlike all I had ever seen before in him, that I laughed in his face.

“I am satisfied—and yet—yet—,” again his whole countenance altered, and his eyes were filled anew; “and yet, my dear fellow, I am *a haunted man!*”

I stared, and then he burst into another of those fits of uncontrollable laughter, which continued until the tears ran down his cheeks and fell, drop after drop. From the very tip end of that remarkable nose, which I never can get out of my head, upon the crimson velvet sofa, to which he was clinging with all his might, as if to steady himself in his paroxysm of mirth. I began to feel uneasy, to grow dignified, to fear that, of the two, I was more to be pitied than he, and after a while to wax wrath. But when he looked up, a minute afterwards, with that wo-begone piteous expression which he sometimes wore, I saw that he was a broken-hearted man. I knew that some unaccountable sorrow was eating him away at the core; I could see it in his eyes, I could hear it in his low breathing, and I forgave him. He observed the change in my aspect, I supposed; for he began that moment to tell me his story without another word of circumlocution or apology. “I must lay my case before you,” said he: “you deserve it. Some of your notions with regard to my strange malady are so comforting—so strengthening to the only hope I have left, that I must lay open my whole heart to you. You do not understand me, I see. The notions I allude to have been pilfered from you in our ordinary conversation, after a lounge through the hospitals and dissecting rooms. I do not ask of you to cleanse the foul bosom of that perilous stuff which makes other men mad; I have nothing to do with love, less with ambition; I am neither a guilty nor a disappointed man—you begin to breathe more freely I perceive—but I do ‘ask you to minister to a mind diseased,’ to ‘pluck from the

memory a rooted sorrow,’ to bring ‘some sweet oblivious antidote’—I care not what, the phial of death would be welcome to me if it could be administered by mistake; for, to tell you the truth, I have not the courage—courage men call it—to destroy myself; though there is not a day in the year, hardly an hour in the day, when death would not be welcome to me—any death.”

I believed him. There was that in every look, and that in every tone of his deep, quiet, smooth voice, which made belief a thing of necessity.

He continued. “About fourteen years ago I was bitten by a dog”—

I started, I suppose; for, to say the truth, I was completely thrown off my guard by the suddenness and strangeness of this communication. He dropped his eyes when they met mine, turned very pale, and then added—

“A favourite spaniel of my mother’s—a water spaniel not bigger than a large cat, poor Flora; and fourteen years ago.” As he said this, he tried to laugh, but the laugh died away with a convulsive motion of the eyes, and a slight quiver of the under lip. “And yet, sir, although, as you see, I have nothing on earth to fear, still I am a haunted man—haunted by strange human faces bowing to me, and firmly persuaded that one day or other I shall die of hydrophobia, and be smothered between two feather-beds. Did you ever hear any thing so ridiculous?”

“Never,” said I, wondering what would be the issue of all this. “But I should like to ask you one question—was the dog mad?”

“Ah, I had forgotten the best part of the whole story,” and he laughed—“ha, ha, ha—we never knew; she ate and drank well to the last: I was drinking at the time she bit me—ha, ha, ha! But she was sickened and died soon after, and we had reason to believe

that a very decided case of hydrophobia occurred, among the hounds of a neighbor, where Flora had been visiting. You are astonished, of course, at my folly.”

I knew not what to say. I began to have a very uncomfortable misgiving, not so much on the score of hydrophobia, as on that of partial derangement; when, all at once, it flashed into my mind that his reason for hurrying off so abruptly, when he happened to be walking near the fountain that plays in the garden of the palais-royal, and peradventure his frequent refusal to take wine after it was ordered and poured out, a thing I had observed that very day and often before, might proceed from his dread of liquids. A cold shiver ran through my veins at the bare idea—a thrill of horror. And there he say eyeing me, as if the very next word I spoke would be a matter of life and death to him. He began to be dreadfully agitated—and so indeed was I: for, after trying to rally my powers and change the current of conversation, I found it impossible; I had neither the courage nor the ability; I could not have breathed a light word for the next half hour, to save a fellow creature’s life. Other circumstances now crowded upon my recollection: his unwillingness to sit in a draught of cold air, as he called it, though it came through a key-hole; his trying to persuade me one day to shave without a glass, and never look into one for any purpose whatever, glasses being too effeminate for men, he said; his breaking out in a fit of ungovernable fury on our entering his room at the café, because a waiter, in opening the door, had let in the light of a dozen flashing mirrors upon us, which they were preparing to cover the walls with; his habit of looking away or shutting his eyes and swallowing his coffee by tea-spoonfuls and gulp after gulp; his strange reason for preferring chocolate—strange till now, because they made it so thick. Nay more—and



again my blood thrilled at the recollection—perhaps the poor fellow’s behavior in church, where I first saw him, was entirely owing to the same dreadful aversion to liquids!

“You do not answer me; it cannot be possible that you have any fears on my account? Consider the length of time; the species of animal, for the water dog, you know, is never afflicted with hydrophobia; the doubtfulness, moreover, of her being in that way, apart from this fact, about which all naturalists concur, do they not?”

What could I saw? In the first place, we have no *proof* with regard to any species of dog that would justify the position of poor Smith; for if they cannot originate the disease, they may communicate it, perhaps, as Newfoundland dogs do: naturalists do not even pretend to know anything about the subject. In the next place, what proof had he that the dog in question was a water dog; the size and the fact of its being a lap-dog or a family pet, were both unfavourable to the supposition.

I referred him to books. “The devil take your books,” said he: “it was they and your infernal newspapers that first set me thinking of this frightful possibility. I read volumes and volumes in all the languages of Europe, and they left me more than half dead from their tenor. I met with cases well authenticated, beautifully authenticated, of symptoms appearing eighteen, twenty, and even thirty years after the bite, followed by death, sir, death. Dr. Bardsley, of Manchester,<sup>82</sup> mentions a case of twelve years, you know; and the Dictionary of Medical Sciences another of ten years. From that moment I was no longer master of myself; I had forgotten the circumstance of the bite entirely, and should never have remembered it again, but for a death, reported in the newspapers, which could only be traced to an incident of three years’ standing. I applied, forthwith, to

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<sup>82</sup> See an article titled “Hydrophobia Simulata.” *The Medico-chirurgical Review and Journal of Medical Science*, vol. 9. London: G. Hayden, 1826.

a most eminent physician, who prescribed liverwort and black-pepper; to a second, who gave me belladonna, hydrochlorine or oxymuriatic acid, opium, and the Lord knows what, in doses large enough to kill if they did not cure; to a third who insisted on bleeding me to death. At the end of which time I concluded to throw aside my books, read no more newspapers, and never allow another great man to prescribe for me while I breathed the breath of life.

“And I have kept my resolution. You are the first to whom I have told my story: and you will be the last. No human creature but you; not even my brothers, and I have three entirely worthy of confidence; not even my poor wife, whom I have abandoned only because I love her too much to let her know the cause of my malady; ever did or ever shall know the true cause of my suffering and bereavement; for at times it is a bereavement, and a terrible one, as you saw that day in the little church, where my second paroxysm fell upon me, and let me stretched out upon the floor, without strength to move or even to cry out.”

“The second?—and fifteen months ago?” said I; and a thought struck me: I trembled from head to foot, wondering, at the same time, why it had not struck me before; how could I be so stupid! “Will you allow me to ask you two or three questions?” said I.

“Two or three hundred if you please: what are they?”

“Have you ever had any symptoms to trouble you?”

“Yes;” and his countenance fell.

“What are they?”

“All of one sort: an aversion to liquids; a periodical fear of any thing and every thing in a swift motion, so that a fly touching my face would make me jump out of the chair. You wonder at me of course, and, to tell you the truth, I wonder at myself. You know, and I know, that my fears are childish, preposterous; that the cases I have referred to are impossible in the very nature of things.”

He grew very earnest here; but I saw by his eagerness and trepidation that he was trying to persuade himself, not me, of the truth of what he said.

“Impossible in the very nature of things; and yet they work with me by night and by day, wearing me to the grave and unfitting me for all the purposes of life. Twenty times a day when I am alone—for in the presence of others I live in continual terror of betraying myself—I go up to a mirror in the next room, for I allow of none, as you observe, in my own; and the detestable fashion here of building their wainscots of looking glasses and gold-leaf I cannot endure; or I put myself in the way of a current of air, merely to see if I can do so without uneasiness; and every night of my life I wake thirsty and feverish, and lying hour after hour longing, and yet dreading, to lift a glass of cold water to my parched lips. In the name of God, therefore, what am I to do?”

“When did these symptoms first appear?”

“About five years ago; nine years after the accident. Ah! your countenance brightens up! sure you have something more than a hope to comfort me with!”

His tone of voice went to my heart; I could have fallen upon his neck as if he had been a younger brother suddenly snatched from death. “It is a pity,” said I, “that, having read so much, you did not read more.”

“Why so?—I was tired to death, and frightened to death, and have been so at intervals ever since; my fears pulling one way and common sense another.”

“Will you put yourself under my care?”

“No.”

“Will you read a book or two?”

“A medical book?—no never; I would as soon read one of your essays,” bowing. I laughed, of course, and so did he; what else could we do?

“Have you any other symptoms?” continued I.

“No.”

“Then I will undertake your cure. The symptoms you mention are not by any means confined to hydrophobia; there, there, do not be agitated, hear me through; the dread of water is not a conclusive symptom, any more than aerophobia, a dread of air, or pantophobia, a dread of everything.<sup>83</sup> In point of fact there never is a dread of water; but, on the contrary, a desire of water. Fear of itself, the mere apprehension of such a death, is now generally known to be capable of producing all the symptoms that you are afflicted with.”

He started from his chair, and demanded proof.

“John Hunter<sup>84</sup> mentions a case, and Barbantini<sup>85</sup> another.”

“Where, where?”

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<sup>83</sup> Sauvages, François Boissier de. *Nosologia Methodica*. 1763.

<sup>84</sup> For an interesting reflection on John Hunter’s treatment of hydrophobia, see Surgeon Jessé Foot’s *The Life of John Hunter*. London: T. Becket, 1794.

<sup>85</sup> “Hydrophobia.” *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 1, no. 21, 8 July 1828, p. 333.

“In the Italian Journal of Physic and Chemistry, 1817, where the individual who had been bitten and was lying at the point of death under all the worst symptoms of hydrophobia, was restored by having the dog led into his chamber and shown to him in perfect health.”

“I wont [sic] read the cases myself,” said he, “I wont, I wont, I have said so and I’ll stick to it: but I’ll tell you what I will do—if you will read them to me, by heaven” capering about the room like a madman, “I’ll build a temple to you!”

“Yet more,” said I, “the symptoms you mention are not only insufficient to convict you of hydrophobia; but sufficient of themselves, and perfectly conclusive, to show that you are free from that awful distemper.”

“How so?”

“The length of time since you were first attacked and the long intervals; had you read more upon the subject, or less, you might have been cured long ago.”

“Sir--doctor—my friend; I wont put myself under your care; but if you will make up a prescription, I’ll copy it; and if you’ll tell me what to do, I’ll do it.”

“Agreed. Go home to your wife. Take your regular exercise, night and morning. Avoid strange faces”—he bowed here with the utmost gravity. “Go through a course of gymnastics in the open air. Have done with feeling your pulse, with medical books and cases reported in the newspapers; and, above all, copy the following prescription:

“Pil. pan. pleb. vel domest. 4 un.

Aq. font. frig. ad lib.

Mel. com. 3 un.

Sinap. alb. &c. &c. ad lib.”

He did so. We parted: and that day twelvemonth, after my return to Philadelphia, he wrote me to say, that he was the happiest fellow on the face of the earth perfectly cured of every thing in the world, except his wife, and so much of hydrophobia as consisted in the dread of water; for, in spite of my prescription, he had never been able, and was afraid he never should be able, to overcome his repugnance to that liquid, thought he had contrived a substitute for *aq. font. frig. ad. lib. in vin. rub. ex Portu. vetust. opt. quant. suff.* or the very best of old port wine, and a plenty of it. To be sure he was still a haunted man; but then he was only haunted with the ghost of a long buried dyspepsia.

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## CHAPTER 1

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## CHAPTER 2

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## CHAPTER 3

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## CHAPTER 4

### BEFORE HOMOPHOBIA: *HORROR FEMINAE* AND EARLY SEXUAL CONVERSION THERAPY AFTER WESTPHAL'S *KONTRÄRE SEXUALEMPFINDUNG*

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## CHAPTER 5

### TOWARDS AN AGE OF MYSOPHOBIA: MICROCONTAMINATIONS IN SILAS WEIR MITCHELL'S "CAT FEAR" SURVEYS, MARK TWAIN'S *THREE THOUSAND YEARS AMONG THE MICROBES*, AND ZORA NEALE HURSTON'S *THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD*

#### + CONCLUSION

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